



**K-L-M'S  
CARIBBEAN  
DECADE  
1934 - 1944**

**ROYAL DUTCH AIRLINES · CURAÇAO, N.W.F.I.**

8

NA Sg. K73.1

K.L.M.'s, Caribbean

Decade 1934-1944

Rogue

12.497





1934



1944

K L M ' S  
C A R I B B E A N  
D E C A D E



NA.SgK 73.1

The Story of the Operations of Royal Dutch Airlines in  
the West Indies since December 1934

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THIS IS THE STORY of a bridgehead, which was established at the end of 1934 in the West Indies. In 1940 it was completed far enough to support the Western end of the bridge through the air which KLM planned to build over the mid-Atlantic, in this way linking by aeroplane our little country at the North Sea shore with its territories in the Western hemisphere. But the European war, started in 1939 and unleashed to its full fury in 1940, prevented us from placing the arch. So the bridgehead had to stand by itself much longer than anticipated; we tried and succeeded in developing our system of airlines in the Caribbean, originally intended as feeders for the transatlantic service, into an independent and finally self-supporting unit.

This is not a story of heroes, of superhuman efforts, nor of astronomical figures, of huge quantities of intricate machinery, of giant organizations of manpower and material. It is just a simple account of a handful of people with half a dozen planes, by no means all experts, but reliable workers, devoted to their jobs, notwithstanding the annoying and sometimes troublesome moments they had to endure; the little hardships caused by the not-too-tropical but after a few years somewhat wearisome climate, the physical strain of being on duty in the cockpit or behind a desk for long hours, working day and night on planes and engines when the sweat blinded their eyes and made the tools slip through their fingers, the minor irritations often resulting from living for several years in a small community on a small island.

We sincerely believe that all these unpleasant things were more than compensated by the knowledge that they had a share in the development of the world's airways, and later, when the war caused the destruction of almost everything KLM had built during the last twenty years, the part they played in the struggle for the survival of their Royal Dutch Airlines.

Several of these men will find their names mentioned in this book, but the others should not think that omission of theirs is a lack of appreciation. May this story be a tribute to all the people who joined hands and brains to build the bridgehead.



*Albert Plesman, founder of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines*





**20** YEARS AGO J. J. Thomassen van der Hoop linked by air, for the first time in history, Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, and Batavia, the capital of the Netherlands East Indies, 9000 miles apart. His plane was a single-engine Fokker F-7 transport, powered by a Rolls-Royce engine of 350 H.P., and was barely able to maintain a cruising speed of 80 miles an hour. The next milestone on the difficult road to a regular service between the two territories was the speedy flight made in 1927, under command of KLM's senior pilot, G. J. Geysendorffer.

## Early plans

The work of those pioneers inspired several other Dutchmen to devote their talents to the peaceful expansion of civil aviation over the world. Our review of the history of the Netherlands aviation in the West Indies should be incomplete if we failed to mention here the unrelentless efforts of KLM's young pilot Jan van Onlangs, who, as far back as 1928, started to study seriously the possibility of a flight from Amsterdam to Curacao, in the Netherlands West Indies; and who succeeded in arousing the whole-hearted interest of the Dutch people in this undertaking. It should be remembered that such a flight would include a

*Lockheed TROEPIAAL over Willemstad Harbor, Curacao, N.W.I.*





*Caribbean schooners, only means of transportation for several centuries*

crossing of the Atlantic Ocean between Africa and the South American continent, which are 2000 miles apart at the narrowest point. This was far in excess of the maximum range of transport-planes in those days. Unfortunately this daring young pilot was killed in an airplane crash in Bangkok in December 1931, at a time when his preparations for the planned flight to the West Indies were all but completed.

It was shortly before that time that the Netherlands territories in America attracted the attention not only of Dutch aviation interests, but of foreign operators as well.

## The Netherlands territories in America

The Netherlands' America consists of two parts which are in a straight line a little over 1000 miles apart, and which differ greatly geographically and economically. One part is formed by six small islands called Curacao, after the main island of the group. The three larger islands, which have a total popula-

tion of about 100,000, are Curacao, Aruba, and Bonaire, located in the southern part of the Caribbean, at only 60 miles distance from the South American mainland. The three other islands, St. Maarten (half of which belongs to France), Saba and St. Eustatius are even smaller than the first group. They are located in the far northeastern corner of the Caribbean, about 550 miles from the main group. Their total population numbers only a few thousand and their commercial significance is very little.

Though all six islands are in the tropic region, the climate is moderate and in general, healthy. The rainfall on Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao is extremely low which makes agriculture on these islands very difficult. Part of the water needed for industrial purposes is imported by tanker, whereas in the dry periods the municipal water service has to resort to distilling sea water to supplement the meagre supply from the hundreds of small wells.

The Dutch occupied Curacao in 1654, after which the few remaining Spaniards and Indians left for the mainland. The attraction of Curacao was, and still is, its excellent harbors and sheltered roadsteads which, in the olden days, made it the focus of trade of the Caribbean. Use of cheap slave labor resulted in some agricultural production, which however dropped sharply after the abolishment of slavery in 1865. From then on, also due to the shift of shipping interests to other harbors, the territory of Curacao led a far from prosperous existence and the interest of the people of the Netherlands in the West Indies part of the Kingdom was pitifully low.

This situation changed entirely after 1916, when the Royal Dutch Shell Company started to build an oil refinery on the island. The crude oil produced in Venezuela and brought to Curacao from the Lake of Maracaibo in lighters and small tankers, was refined in Curacao and then shipped by large ocean tankers to a multitude of destinations all over the world. By now the Shell Oil plant in Curacao has grown to be one of the largest oil refineries on earth and, needless to say, is playing a most important role in the war effort of the Allied Nations.

Prosperity made its entry into Aruba twelve years later when the Standard Oil Company chose this island for the home of its largest refinery. Aruba, until then the poorest of the three, was about to have a period of unknown wealth; its population, mainly through the import of labor from various parts of the Caribbean, doubled in less than fifteen years.

As a consequence of the oil business, Curacao and Aruba became ports of call for several important steamship lines. Travelers started to note the cheerful, breezy climate of Willemstad, its clean streets, its brightly painted houses and its well provided stores. As a result the tourist trade developed into a flourishing business until the war came. For some time it had looked as if Bonaire would have its refinery too, but unfortunately for the inhabitants this plan was dropped after some American oil interests had merged. Many families moved to Aruba

and Curacao and went to work in the oilplants on those islands. Bonaire's most important export item remained aloe, a sap used in medicine and dyes.

A condition that aided considerably in developing the trade of the Netherlands' islands in the Caribbean was the low import duties in comparison to those in neighboring countries. This encouraged foreign travelers and tourists to make their purchases in Curacao, which they sometimes did to an extravagance.

Surinam or Dutch Guyana, on the mainland of South America, differs from Curacao in many respects. It has a fully tropical climate with high precipitation. The greater part of the land is hardly penetrable jungle, through which the wide rivers, with innumerable cascades and torrential rapids, provide inadequate accessibility. Only the coastal region, 50 to 40 miles deep inland, can be considered as fertile enough for the cultivation of tropical products, which, for the greater part by mishap and setbacks, never succeeded in helping the Surinam people to earn more than a bare existence. The production of gold and some other minerals, though tried again and again, was hardly worth mentioning until, in later years, it was found that Surinam had rich deposits of bauxite-ore from which aluminum is made. From then on this territory too gradually entered

a new and prosperous period. The bauxite output, as can readily be understood, will now have reached its peak production; it must be foreseen that after the war there will be a sharp drop. In the meantime the financial position of Surinam has greatly improved.

### Foreign airlines in the Caribbean

The favorable economical development of Curacao, as the result of the establishment of the oil industry, of course drew attention to the airlines operating in the neighborhood.

In 1919 German-Austrian interests founded in Colombia the SCADTA, which, due mainly to the characteristic geographical situation in that country, became one of the first entirely self-supporting airlines.

The capital of Colombia, Bogota, is situated in the mountains in the center of the country, 450 miles distant from its main Caribbean port, Barranquilla. The trip from Barranquilla to Bogota by flat-bottomed steamer on the Magdalena River and the last part by railway, used to take sixteen days. Flying in small hops along the river SCADTA's floatplanes could make it in one full day. Later, when airfields were established, landplanes reduced the trip to seven

*Annabaai and Waaigat, Curacao*



*Aruba Oil Refinery*





*Surinam River Rapids*

hours. Nowadays the Douglas DC-3s of AVIANCA, a subsidiary of Pan American Airways, which took over the operations of SCADTA in 1940, make this trip in two and a half hours.

In 1926 SCADTA looked around for extensions to other countries, and among others they planned to run an airline from Barranquilla to Curacao. For the purpose of establishing their seaplane base in the Schottegat, the inner harbor of Curacao, they purchased two small islands, on one of which they erected a tiny station building. However, this project was never realized, and the only SCADTA planes that ever came down in Curacao were those on trial flights.

In 1927 the airline which gradually became the world's largest international operator came into existence. Pan American Airways started a service with landplanes from Florida to Havana. In 1928 PAA was awarded a postal contract to carry the mail between Miami and Paramaribo, in Surinam; in 1930 this line was extended as far as Buenos Aires. Paramaribo has always been a stopping place for Pan American Airways, the first twelve years for its flying boats on the river, and since 1941 on the Zandery field.

With regard to Curacao, things developed in a different way. Pan American's flying boats crossed the Caribbean from Miami to Barranquilla via Kingston (Jamaica), and the company endeavored to create an East-West link between Colombia and its trunk line from Miami via Trinidad and Paramaribo and further down south. This, however, they were not able to accomplish without difficulties. The Government of Venezuela, under the leadership of General Juan Vincente Gomez, apparently had objections to permitting foreign air lines to fly all along the north coast. The PAA line from Barranquilla went to Maracaibo, from there to Curacao and finally from Curacao to Puerto Cabello, a small harbor in Venezuela, a little more than 100 miles from Curacao. This was the dead-end. At any rate, this service provided Curacao with a connection with the international air system of PAA. In the beginning PAA's 6-passenger S-58 amphibians landed in the Schottegat Harbor, but after the Government of Curacao completed the construction of a 2300-foot landing strip near the plantation Hato on the north coast of the island, PAA's planes started to use this field. Contrary to Curacao's expectations, PAA moved out a short time later, when they succeeded in entering into a contract with the Venezuelan Government, allowing them to extend their service to Trinidad. Instead of landing in Curacao, PAA used a small field in Venezuela, Cumarebo, as their intermediate stop between Maracaibo and La Guaira, the port of the capital Caracas.

About 1929 another foreign air service showed interest in operating an air line to Curacao. This was the Compagnie Generale Aeropostale, a French company which had established an air-sea-air connection over the South Atlantic in 1928. They formulated ambitious plans for expansion up the east coast of South America to the French West Indies and eastward to Curacao. At the same time, with French pilots and French equipment, this company started a subsidiary in Venezuela, in the beginning confining itself to domestic traffic.

In 1933 the Aeropostale abandoned Venezuela as a result of financial difficulties in the parent company and the Venezuelan Government took over the line, including most of the crews and all planes. Later this set-up was reorganized into the Linea Aeropostal Venezolana.

So, in 1929 it seemed probable that there would shortly be three foreign lines flying to Curacao and at least two to Paramaribo.

## Report to the Government

To advise the Governments of Curacao and Surinam on legal, technical and commercial matters concerning international aviation, the Netherlands Government in that year sent out to the West Indies two experts in their fields, Mr. U. F. M. Dellaert, manager of Schiphol, the municipal airport of Amsterdam,

and Mr. D. de Vries, general traffic manager of KLM. These two men made a trip of over two months in the West Indies and conferred with a great many government and company officials. The results of their journey were related in a most enlightening report, covering all angles of the many problems involved. The contents of that report, even several years later, proved to be of great value in connection with the establishment of KLM's operations in the West Indies. In particular their thorough investigation of suitable sites for the construction of future airports on Netherlands', as well as foreign territory, was extremely helpful in speeding up the program that later was decided upon. Apart from the general problems Messrs. Dellaert and de Vries had to consider, they had been requested also to give their views on the possibility of establishing airlines under the Netherlands' flag in the Caribbean. They worked out several plans on a limited scale, but due to a considerable extent to the expected competition from the three foreign lines, the result was not very encouraging from a financial standpoint.

In that period KLM's attention was largely focused on the development of the Amsterdam-Batavia line and it can readily be understood that, due to the rather unfavorable conclusion of the report dealing with the possibility of creating KLM services in the West Indies, further steps were postponed for the time being.

## Two audacious projects

However, the interest was not dead. At the end of 1953 two daring plans were formulated by Mr. Albert Plesman, Managing Director of KLM since the foundation of the company in 1919. One plan was for the participation of KLM in the London-Melbourne race with the company's first Douglas DC-2 plane; and the second, the execution of a transatlantic flight from Amsterdam to the Netherlands West Indies, in connection with the commemoration of the tri-centenary authority of the Netherlands over Curacao. For the coordination of the various departments dealing with the technical problems, and for the handling of administrative affairs connected with these flights, a special department at the KLM head-office was created, of which Mr. L. F. Bouman, before that KLM's Airport Manager in Rotterdam, was put in charge.

KLM's participation in the Mac Robertson Race created quite a sensation throughout the world. Captain Parmentier landed his DC-2, with its crew of four plus three passengers, only a very short time after Scott arrived in his specially built De Havilland Comet Racer and thus won the first prize in the handicap race. Mr. B. Prins, the flight engineer on this trip, later became chief engineer of KLM in Curacao.



*Crew of the SNIP, l. to r.: Van der Molen, Capt. Hondong, Van Balkom, Stolk*

## The transatlantic flight of the Snip

The flight of the SNIP (Snipe), a three-engined Fokker plane, from Amsterdam to Curacao in December 1954, also was a marked success. On December 22, 1954 at 2:50 P.M. local time, the wheels of the SNIP touched the runway of Hato airport at Curacao, and we consider that moment the birth of KLM's West Indies Division. Preparation for this trip had been started months in advance. To arouse the interest of the public in this venture and also in view of covering part of the costs involved, it was decided to offer the opportunity to send Christmas letters to the West Indies with this flight. Special seals and stamps would make the envelopes used on this occasion a precious collector's item.

Authorization to fly over the various countries concerned and permission to land at a number of specified airports, as well as emergency fields, had to be secured. Radio facilities had to be organized as part of the route had never before been covered by any planes at all. Utmost care had to be given to the navigational and meteorological details. An extensive study of Atlantic weather conditions had been made; the exact route had been determined and the date

for the departure been fixed so as to secure the most favorable weather for the plane's ocean crossing.

This important detail was in charge of the first officer-navigator, J. J. van Balkom. Besides Van Balkom the following crew was chosen: Captain J. J. Hondong, who had been flying with KLM since 1925 and a veteran of several trips on the Amsterdam-Batavia line, was to be in command; S. van der Molen was the second navigator and wireless operator and L. D. Stolk was flight engineer. They were both most capable technicians with several years' experience in the air.

The following schedule was planned:

First day: Amsterdam—Casablanca (1606 miles)

Second " Casablanca—Porto Praia (Cape Verde Islands)—(1645 miles)

Third " Rest in Porto Praia and preparation for Atlantic crossing

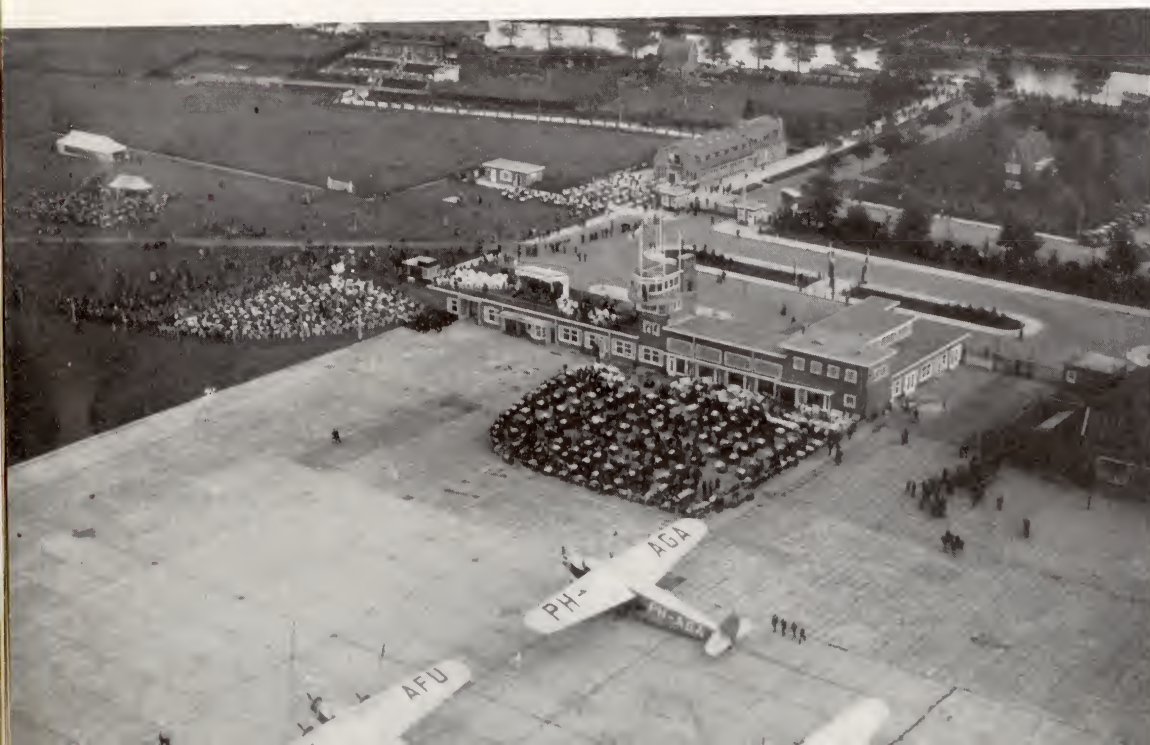
Next night: Porto Praia—Paramaribo (2286 miles)

Fourth day: Rest in Paramaribo

Sixth " Paramaribo—Curacao (1065 miles)

Therefore, a total distance of 6600 miles was to be covered.

*Starting point of the SNIP's flight; Schiphol airport, Amsterdam*



Because of the interest shown in this flight in Venezuela and for the purpose of promoting relations with that country, it was decided later to include an intermediate landing in La Guaira in the last hop.

As everybody knows, the navigator in an airplane is not so much interested in the speed and direction of the wind on the ground or at sea level, but for the correct calculation of his trip he needs as much information as possible concerning the winds at various higher altitudes. On the route to be followed very little data of this character was available and therefore KLM requested assistance of the Netherlands Government Weather Bureau as well as of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company. Among many other important routes the ships of this company were regularly plying between Amsterdam and Paramaribo. They did not exactly follow the route of the SNIP, but the cooperation of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company went so far as to have one of its steamers, the "Stuyvesant," direct its course in such a way that the day before the departure of the SNIP from Porto Praia and the night of the actual crossing, the ship would be about halfway between Porto Praia and Paramaribo. Special instruments and all the necessary equipment to provide information of the winds at high altitudes were on board and two members of the crew had been thoroughly trained to handle this intricate apparatus. Moreover, the arrangement with the "Stuyvesant" was an extra safety measure in case anything might go wrong en route. Another most valuable assistance was received from the Royal Netherlands Navy. One of its submarines, Hr.Ms. K-18, which was on a scientific mission in the Atlantic, was ordered to take a specially designated station during the SNIP's crossing, so as to be able to provide weather data and help in case of an emergency.

The greatest possible collaboration was also received from the Portuguese Government Weather Service, as well as from the Government operated aviation radio branches in France and Portugal and last but not least, from the Curacao and Surinam Government radio services.

For this trip the SNIP was equipped with two independent Philips radio sets, one for the normal low frequencies in use in international aviation in Europe and one special high frequency set for the communication over long distances.

The longest hop to be made on this flight, 3657 kilometers or 2286 miles, of course was much longer than the normal maximum range of the SNIP. Therefore, four extra fuel tanks were installed in the cabin, bringing the total gasoline capacity of the plane up to 1550 gallons and extending its range to 3200 miles. The plane had been equipped with stronger engines, 550 H.P. Wasp TD motors; the maximum total weight at the moment of departure from Porto Praia had been calculated to be 22,000 pounds, instead of 17,000 for normal operations.

Much publicity had been given to the opportunity to send special airmail to Surinam, Venezuela and Curacao. The response of the Dutch people was sur-

CANADA

# ROUTE OF THE "SNIP" DECEMBER 15-22, 1934

CHICAGO  
BOSTON  
NEW YORK  
WASHINGTON

UNITED STATES

HAVANA

ATLANTIC OCEAN

AMSTERDAM  
LONDON

PARIS  
FRANCE

MARSEILLES

LISBON  
MADRID  
SPAIN

ALICANTE

CASA BLANCA

PORTO PRAIA

AFRICA

DAKAR

CARIBBEAN SEA

ARUBA  
CURAÇAO

LA GUAYRA

PORT OF SPAIN

PARAMARIBO

VENEZUELA

COLOMBIA

BRAZIL

SOUTH AMERICA



TECHNICAL DATA CONCERNING AIRCRAFT  
OPERATED BY KLM IN THE WEST INDIES DURING 1934-1944  
(Manufacturers' Figures)

	1	2	3	4	5*	6*
Year.....	1934	1937	1938	1940	1943	1944
Manufacturer.....	Fokker	Fokker	Lockheed	Douglas	Lockheed	Lockheed
Type.....	F-18	F-8	14 (Superelectra)	DC-5	18 (Lodestar)	12
Number of Passenger Seats.....	12-15	Photo plane	9-10	18-22	12-14	6
Wing Span.....	80 ft. 10 in.	75 ft. 5 in.	65 ft. 6 in.	78 ft.	65 ft. 6 in.	49 ft. 6 in.
Length.....	60 ft. 8 in.	55 ft. 1 in.	44 ft. 2½ in.	62 ft. 2 in.	49 ft. 10 in.	36 ft. 4 in.
Height.....	15 ft. 7 in.	13 ft. 10 in.	11 ft. 5 in.	19 ft. 10 in.	11 ft. 5½ in.	9 ft. 11 in.
Wing Area.....	904 sq. ft.	855 sq. ft.	551 sq. ft.	824 sq. ft.	551 sq. ft.	352 sq. ft.
Weight Empty (lbs.).....	9,587**	8,370	10,750	13,674	11,790	5,960
Weight Loaded (lbs.).....	16,640**	13,224	17,500	20,000	18,500	8,650
Maximum Speed (miles).....	152	135	225	250	270	214
Cruising Speed (miles).....	126	110	200	195	240	200
Cruising Range (miles).....	930**	600	2,000	1,600	1,890	1,000
Fuel Capacity (gals.).....	525**	380	520	550	644	200
Engines.....	3-550 H.P. P & W-TD-1	2-550 H.P. P & W-Wasp TD-1	2-760 H.P. Cyclone F.62	2-900 H.P. Cyclone G.102	2-1000 H.P. Cyclone G.205A	2-450 H.P. P & W-Wasp Jr.

\*Property of Netherlands Government.

\*\*Normal operations.



prising and beyond expectation; 26,521 letters and parcels were collected at midnight of the 15th of December, one of the strangest items being a bottle of real good Dutch beer sent by a famous brewery in Rotterdam to its agent in Curacao and bearing no less than fifteen dollars worth of stamps.

Everything was prepared at Amsterdam's airport for the departure just at midnight on December 15, 1934. The weather was miserable; wet snow drifted from low hanging clouds; the fan-shaped beams of the strong flood-lights at the other side of the field hardly penetrated the haze and precipitation. Still, a sizable crowd of authorities, friends and visitors were gathered on the slippery platform to wish the SNIP a lucky trip. The weather forecasts were not good either; practically all northwestern Europe gave reports of low clouds and limited visibility. Yet, Hondong decided to go. Hands were shaken; the roar of the engines, being tested for the last time, drowned the last shouts of "good luck and happy landing." The SNIP turned around and disappeared in the darkness, only its tail-light visible for some time; then a moment's silence, then the drone of its motors again, its roar over the edge of the field. The plane disappeared into the darkness and another pioneering flight had begun.

Bad weather continued, strong head-winds were encountered. Hondong concluded he could not make Casablanca that day; he preferred to await more favorable weather and to refuel. At 8:15 A.M. he landed in Marseilles and later the same day he proceeded to Alicante in Spain. The following day, at noon, the SNIP arrived at Casablanca and was greeted with a hearty reception by the small Dutch colony.

The flight on the 17th from Casablanca to Porto Praia, on the arid, lonely island of Santiago, was comparatively easy. The 18th was used for a careful

check-up of the engines and the radio. About 1200 gallons of gasoline had to be poured from small tins into the fuel tanks, but the Shell Company agents were as active as everywhere. In the afternoon of the 19th the SNIP's three Wasp motors pulled the over-loaded plane without difficulty from Porto Praia's airfield and the Atlantic crossing had begun. Radio contact with the "Stuyvesant" and not long afterward with Paramaribo was established.

On December 20th, at 6:00 A.M. in Paramaribo hundreds of people were taken aboard a special train. Two hours later they arrived at the Zandery airfield, which had been hastily prepared on a vast savannah at about 30 miles from town. The narrow track railway, on which the old ramshackle cars could not go faster than fifteen miles an hour, was the only connection with Paramaribo. Fortunately it was early in the morning and still cool, and everybody seemed to enjoy the ride.

At 8:00 A.M., just at the moment when the train came to a halt near the field, the SNIP was visible in the blue sky to the east. All anxiety was over, but there had been some! Halfway over the ocean Van der Molen's radio set suddenly stopped transmitting; neither the radio station in Paramaribo nor the "Stuyvesant" could hear it any more. Though there was a faint indication that it was only the radio transmitter which had gone wrong, it still caused concern among the many people crowded in one of Paramaribo's streets near the radio office during most of the night. A few hours later Van der Molen had his set working again, though he still doesn't know exactly how; the main thing is the communication was reestablished. There had been a moment of anxiety for the crew too, when, about mid-way over the ocean they had to switch to another set of fuel tanks. Through a cause not yet known all the motors suddenly stopped

*The SNIP approaching Zandery airfield, Surinam*



*The SNIP landed on Surinam soil, December 20, 1934*

*Governor Kielstra compliments Capt. Hondong and his crew*



and four men held their breath. Fortunately it lasted for only a few seconds and the engines picked up rapidly.

Van Balkom's navigation had been extremely accurate. Aided by the data received from the "Stuyvesant," he had calculated that when flying between 2250 and 3000 feet the wind would be in the most favorable direction and fairly strong. Though the SNIP was not ideally equipped for shooting stars, he managed to work out his celestial observations precisely. The result was that they hit the South American coast less than four miles from the intended point, an unbelievably slight deviation on an uninterrupted stretch of 2286 miles.

The enthusiasm of the reception at Zandery airfield as well as in town was unlimited. There were official greetings, speeches, parades, from the highest officials to the school children. One of the most charming events was the presentation of a precious cane to each member of the crew and to KLM's West Indies Manager. These canes were skillfully carved from Surinam ironwood; they had a point of buffalo horn and a Surinam gold knob with inscription. The six little girls who made the presentation of the canes were dressed in the colorful native costumes of the six groups of population in Surinam they represented. Most remarkable was the fact that these girls, Netherlands, Negro, Chinese, Javanese, British Indian and pure South American Indian, all recited well chosen verses in faultless Dutch. It really was a heart-warming moment that symbolized the unity of the Surinam races under the Netherlands' flag in a simple but demonstrative way.

On the 22nd of December, early in the morning, the SNIP rose again over the white sandy soil of the Zandery field. Its course was northwest over the vast

Orinoco Delta in the eastern part of Venezuela. Seven hours later it crossed the cloud-topped mountain ranges near the Venezuelan coast and a few minutes later the plane rolled down the red dusty slope of the La Guaira airfield at the foot of the Andes Mountains.

This time it carried two passengers besides the crew, the daughter of the Governor of Surinam, Miss Kielstra, and KLM's West Indies Manager, Mr. Bouman. The latter were rather uncomfortably seated between the huge extra fuel tanks which practically filled the otherwise roomy cabin.

High Venezuelan military and civil authorities, the Netherlands Ambassador and his staff, all members of the Netherlands colony, the entire crew of a Netherlands mail steamer which happened to be in port, and many others were there to welcome the SNIP. The mail for Venezuela was unloaded, then followed some hasty speeches, cheers and handshakes, and off they went for the last hop of 180 miles to their final destination. In about an hour and a half the island of Curacao was sighted, a little earlier than expected. When the wheels of the SNIP touched the coral rock of Hato's runway several hundred people were still running from their parked cars in the direction of the air station, not wanting to miss the official greeting. Thousands were already there. The crew was cordially welcomed by His Excellency, Governor Van Slobbe, by members of the Committee organized for the celebration of this event and by many authorities. Together they went to the platform, profusely decorated with the national colors, red, white, blue and orange; then Governor Van Slobbe read the proclamation stating that Her Majesty, Queen Wilhelmina, had awarded to the four members of the crew the Knights Cross of the Order of Orange-Nassau,

*Indian Chief and family on Zandery field, pay tribute to the SNIP*



*Celebration of the SNIP's arrival in front of Governor's Palace, Paramaribo*



*Six little girls present canes to the SNIP'S CREW*



in recognition of their courage and ability in establishing the air link between the Netherlands' territories in Europe and in the West Indies. There were more speeches, more flowers, more parades and more parties and receptions. The birth of KLM's youngest scion was surrounded by memorable festivities that lasted several days.

On the next day a short trip was made to Aruba. A landing field was planned and a start had been made with clearing the ground. However, on its first visit the SNIP had to make use of a strip of solid beach near Savoneta, a few miles from the Lago Oil Refinery. The population of Aruba showed its acclaim to no lesser degree than the people of Surinam and Curacao.

That same day the SNIP flew back to Curacao and without delay its conversion into a dignified passenger transport was taken in hand, under command of engineer Stolk. He was fortunate to find in Curacao a faithful assistant, Mr. C. Plesman, a nephew of KLM's Managing Director, who had come over by boat. Kees Plesman, by the way, served for many years with the KLM in the West Indies. He is one of those quiet, capable and unobtrusive mechanics you miss very much when they go away, as Plesman had to do in 1940, when the Netherlands Indies Army requested KLM to release him for an important war job in the United States. Of course more help was needed and KLM still is grateful to the vocational school of the St. Thomas College at Curacao which, particularly during the first few years of operation, provided us with several excellent native workers. Julio Coffie was the first one engaged and he is still in KLM's service at Hato.

### Experimental set-up

So, KLM had a plane in Curacao and, of course, plans had already been made for it months before. Since Pan American Airways no longer called at Curacao and neither SCADTA nor the French Aeropostale had realized their projects to extend their services to the Netherlands West Indies, the islands had been depleted of any air connection. Seeing the many excellent steamer connections of Curacao, KLM's Management was not fully convinced that we would be able to attract enough passengers and freight to run local air services between the islands and the mainland without a comparatively high loss. However, the final object was to establish a regular service between Amsterdam and the Netherlands territories in America as soon as suitable planes for this purpose would become available; this idea still stood and it sounded reasonable to try to gradually build up a local feeder net around Curacao that would serve as the Western bridgehead for the future span over the Atlantic.

So orders had been given to KLM's first West Indies Manager to proceed cautiously. Undoubtedly there would be interest in a local service from Curacao to Aruba. The next step that could be accomplished without too much financial risk, was to create a connection with the PAA service running along the Venezuelan coast to Cumarebo, only a half-hour's flying time from Curacao. By hopping over on the days their amphibian made a landing at Cumarebo, Curacao and Aruba would be provided with a direct link to PAA's international system at a minimum cost. Besides an agreement with PAA for this purpose, KLM also needed a concession from the Venezuelan Government to operate a service to and from a Venezuelan port of entry.

*La Guaira, Capt. Hondong, Miss Kielstra, Mr. Bouman;  
December 22, 1934*

*Hondong complimented by Venezuelan Military Commander. Between them  
H.E. the Netherlands Minister to Venezuela*

*The SNIP lands on Hato airport, Curacao, December 22, 1934*



## KLM seeks concession from Venezuela

Before the SNIP took off for its trans-Atlantic flight the recently appointed Manager for the KLM West Indies, Mr. Bouman, had left for Curacao and, after setting up the nucleus of a technical and commercial organization in Curacao, went over to Venezuela to make the necessary contacts. KLM was very fortunate in finding there Mr. C. H. Bakker, agent of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company, who expressed his willingness to charge himself with the representation of KLM in that country. Bakker had been living in Venezuela for a considerable time and he enjoyed the friendship of many high authorities as well as other influential people. It soon appeared that entering into a contract with the Venezuelan Government for the operation of air service involved many more intricate dealings, discussions and negotiations than KLM had anticipated. When the first conferences on the subject were held, civil aviation in Venezuela was under the auspices of the Departamento de Fomento ("development"), to which also belonged mining, communications, oil industry, etc. Contrary to the view of most governments in Europe, the Venezuelan Government considered the concession for a foreign air line not a question that had to be dealt with along the official or diplomatic channels, but purely as a commercial affair which that Government was going to handle directly with the company concerned. Diplomatic assistance or intervention was deemed undesirable. It was only through Bakker's unswerving efforts that we finally succeeded. The old President of the Republic, General Juan Vincente Gomez, was ill most of the time and without his personal approval little could be achieved in that period of autocratic government in Venezuela. It was not until the end of 1936 that KLM's contract with Venezuela was finally granted. More about that will appear in the following pages.

At that time a contract had already been made with the Curacao Trading Company of Amsterdam. They were appointed agents for KLM in La Guaira, for the entire Republic of Colombia, as well as for Surinam, whereas the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company was appointed in the same capacity in Barbados and Trinidad, in Maracaibo and Puerto Cabello, as well as in Willemstad (Curacao) and Oranjestad (Aruba), in the latter two places as passenger-agents only.

In the meantime the SNIP had found a simple and, for the time being, adequate shelter in a temporary structure which was large enough to house the wing, nose and engines. This hangar was 150 feet wide and 60 feet deep, so that the technical staff could work on the plane, protected from the burning sun or the rain, give the engines a thorough overhaul and, after the extra fuel tanks had been removed, refit the cabin with its twelve comfortable chairs. The uncertainty about the financial possibilities of the air service around Curacao was also the reason that the Curacao Government, the owner of the field, did not feel inclined to spend large sums for the construction of permanent buildings. So, for the first few months we had to be content with the wooden nose hangar, at the rear of which was a ticket counter, a customs and immigration office, a stockroom and a little bar, all ingeniously hidden between the uprights of the structure. During later years the interior of the building was changed considerably; it got a concrete flooring, and soon the waiting space for the passengers had to be enlarged. Though after ten years the Hato passenger terminal may seem rather primitive, and though it is not providing all desired facilities, it still fulfills modest requirements, and is a cool and agreeable spot which attracts many visitors under its high roof. In this way it has substantially contributed to further the air-mindedness of the residents of Curacao—because when the people see them flying, they want to fly.



*Governor Van Slobbe  
presents crew with  
Royal decoration*



*First landing on  
the beach on Aruba,  
December 23, 1934*

## Curacao takes to the air

After two weeks of hard work for the small technical staff the SNIP looked spic and span again. Most of the people of Curacao had never been in the air and, following the example of the KLM in Holland where short joy flights offered at a low price induced many people to get acquainted with the modern means of transportation, day after day the SNIP took the air for short trips. So we gave the inhabitants of the island the opportunity to view from aloft that quaintly shaped little spot of white coral rock which seemed to float in the clear blue of the deep Caribbean waters; to locate their own houses between the colorful squares and narrow streets; to spot the ocean steamers, looking no bigger than nut shells and making hardly any visible progress, and the large oil refinery with its thin black stacks and its hundreds of oil tanks, looking like scattered aspirin tablets on a brown and green pillow. In a few days the SNIP took a thousand enthusiastic passengers into the cool air and in this way created a lot of prospective customers.

In the meantime the commercial preparations for a regular service to Aruba were taken in hand. Bouman and his assistant, Jan Koot, closely cooperated with Messrs. S. E. L. Maduro, the well known shipping and banking firm at Curacao, with whom KLM made an agreement to sell tickets and care for the handling of passengers, mail and express. For the same purpose John Eman's Aruba Trading Company was appointed KLM's agent in Aruba. KLM wishes to pay full tribute to both these firms; they spared no time in getting the young branch on its feet and they substantially contributed to KLM's early success.

Part of Messrs. Maduro's office was put at the disposal of KLM's staff, which enjoyed that hospitality until 1958. In that year the head office personnel had been increased so much that it was necessary to move to larger quarters.

As mentioned before, the negotiations with the Venezuelan Government took much more time than expected. Moreover it was thought better to wait with the inauguration of an international service until the whole schedule no longer depended on one single plane, reliable as it might be. But it was decided to start with a simple service to Aruba, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, two round-trips each day, so that the Curacao people immediately could see the advantage of the air service, to go to Aruba in the morning and return the same afternoon. The same excursion by boat took three days. We advertised in the newspapers, printed posters and timetables, tickets, baggage slips, bills-of-lading and manifests, freight reports, reservation forms, exchange orders, and the many other paper things that cluster around every transport organization.

But before inaugurating the service KLM wanted to take the opportunity of becoming a little better known in Venezuela, to the authorities in that country and also to the rather large Dutch colonies residing in Maracaibo and the neighborhood where the crude oil comes from. So a flying trip to Venezuela's most important cities, Maracaibo, Maracay and Caracas, was planned.

Besides the crew and Bouman the SNIP carried as a passenger Mr. Horacio Leyba, the Venezuelan Consul in Curacao. On January 13, 1935 the SNIP took the air and after a two hours' flight Hondong landed his ship on the wide grassy airfield of Maracaibo, where the Dutch residents were assembled.

*First flight to Maracaibo, January 14, 1935*



*A gay party in the Shell Club in Maracaibo*



*Welcome to Maracay airfield. Third from left KLM representative in Venezuela, C. J. Bakker*



They were received later by the Governor of the State Zulia, General M. Perez Soto, and in the Club of the Shell Company a big party was given that lasted until the early morning hours. Next day the SNIP was off to Maracay, the residential town of General Gomez, picturesquely situated near the Valencia Lake, with its Indian monuments at the foot of the mighty Andes range. The party unexpectedly found the luxurious Hotel Jardin a very pleasant place for dinner and dancing, and Mr. Bakker had taken care that they would spend the evening in most agreeable company, among whom were the chiefs of the military and civil aviation in Venezuela, including a Frenchman, Mr. Guerin, a veteran pilot himself, who at that time managed the Aeropostal Venezolana. Mr. and Mrs. Guerin showed that they liked to share with others their excellent stock of dry French champagne; and every member of the crew will remember that kind gentleman, Senor Don Juan Paris and even better his charming daughters, who did so much to make this short visit to Venezuela an unforgettable event.

Next day the SNIP again roared over the Andes toward La Guaira, a picturesque but hot and dusty place on the north coast. The capital of Venezuela, Caracas, has no airport. To reach the city from La Guaira you always have to take an hour's thrilling ride over the winding concrete road from La Guaira to Caracas. This city lies in a lush green valley at a height of 3000 feet, but the motor road reaches an altitude of nearly 4000 feet. This road is a beautiful example of skillful engineering; you only lose the appreciation of the ride if you do it a dozen times in a short period. At any rate, the crew enjoyed it. That same night His Excellency, the Netherlands Ambassador, arranged a reception for the crew to which all foreign ambassadors, charges d'affairs, military and civil

authorities were invited. On that occasion it became known that the President of the Republic had conferred upon Hondong and his men the Order of Simon Bolivar, in appreciation of their contribution to the development of aviation. The awarding of these decorations occurred during a simple ceremony in the Netherlands Embassy. The joyful stay in Caracas was topped off by a delightful party offered by the Netherlands colony in the well-known Suiza Club.

On the 17th the SNIP was back in Curacao. Excursions and parties were over—the real business could start now.



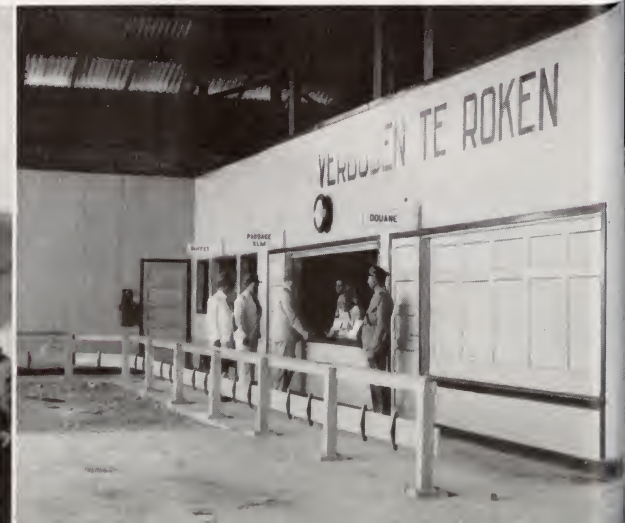
*The SNIP on La Guaira airfield, January 15, 1935*



*Many friends to welcome Hondong at La Guaira, January 15, 1935*



*Ticket and customs counter in first hangar at Hato, April 1935*



# 1935

## KLM's first regular service is opened

In the morning of January 19th the SNIP stood ready for its first flight in regular service to Aruba. Governor Van Slobbe and a few authorities had accepted KLM's invitation to be the first passengers from Curacao to Aruba. For the afternoon trip many passengers had been booked; some of them had flown in various parts of the world, and had been in KLM planes in Europe and Asia. They were the veterans, who considered the 80-mile trip to Aruba hardly worth mentioning. But the majority of the passengers were "freshmen," who never had set foot in a plane. Some said goodbye to their tearful families in a way that made you think they were leaving on an Arctic expedition. KLM's passengers were a true image of the crowd you found in Curacao streets and stores, in its restaurants and hotels. There were Dutchmen of all colors, white, brown and black; Americans and Englishmen, Venezuelans, Colombians, Germans, Swedes, Syrians, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and many others. We started with distributing publicity material received from Holland, and in this way drew attention to the fact that KLM was not a small local enterprise, but a large company with lines practically all over the world. A special folder con-

cerning the West Indies operations was printed in English, Netherlands and Spanish languages; later, to encourage the people of Curacao to visit Aruba and vice versa, week-end round-trips were issued, which included tickets for lodging and meals in the respective hotels.

From a purely operational standpoint the year 1935 was not very exciting. It was a period of preparation, of building up an organization in view of plans for the future.

## Plans for expansion

As mentioned before, KLM's first endeavor was to create connections with Venezuela. The Cumarebo plan was dropped, as it was soon learned that a direct service, Curacao-Aruba-Maracaibo, would provide better facilities for the traveling public and promised better financial results.

As the next step we planned a regular service to La Guaira; at that time, however, traffic between Curacao and La Guaira was much less than between Curacao and Maracaibo. It was nevertheless thought that tourist traffic to Caracas could be developed for people from Curacao and Aruba who wanted to spend a few days in that cool mountain region of Venezuela. The complicated immigration regulations and the high standard of living in Venezuela were a handicap in this respect.

*On the road between  
La Guaira and Caracas*



*In front of the Netherlands Legation in Caracas, after ceremony; 1st row: Stolk, Hondong, Van Balkom, Van der Molen; 2nd row: Consul Leyba, H. E. d'Artillac Brill, Mrs. d'Artillac Brill, Bouman*



*The Netherlands Minister in Caracas, H.E. d'Artillac Brill, decorates crew of SNIP with Order of Simon Bolivar, January 15, 1935*





*Governor Van Slobbe first passenger on scheduled service to Aruba, January 19, 1935*

*Start for the first scheduled trip to Aruba, January 19, 1935*



One of KLM's other projects was to extend the service westward to Barranquilla, the main port of the Republic of Colombia, situated 230 miles west of Maracaibo, as early as possible. This, however, could be done only after two conditions had been fulfilled. First, more equipment and personnel were needed to add that many miles to our schedule; and second, the airfield near Barranquilla should be completed. Barranquilla at the time had only a water base from which they operated with seaplanes up the river and with amphibians to land airports farther in the interior. There had been a tiny landing field near Soledad which SCADTA was planning to convert into a modern airport; but no action had yet been taken.

In 1935 Barranquilla was a very important air junction. Southward SCADTA operated frequent schedules connecting many important cities in Colombia, and Pan American ran a twice-weekly service from Barranquilla via Kingston to Miami. Moreover, they connected Barranquilla westward with Panama and other cities in Central America.

By creating a connection from Curacao to Barranquilla on the right day, it would be possible to reach the U. S. A. from Curacao in one and a half days. In 1935 there was a worthwhile flow of local passenger traffic by boat between Curacao and Barranquilla, so that the prospects for an air connection seemed favorable. However, due to some circumstances which KLM found it difficult to trace, after 1935 the local traffic between Curacao and Colombia dropped considerably and never recovered fully to its previous level. The Curacao-Barranquilla air service as a result remained rather far behind expectations in the early years of operations in the Caribbean.

To the east the same difficulties were met with regard to ground facilities. KLM wanted to expand in that direction, first to the British Island of Trinidad, about 550 miles from Curacao. The capital of Trinidad, Port of Spain, is a busy shipping and aviation center, but, as with Barranquilla, there was only a water base of Pan American Airways. Trinidad was an overnight stop of the PAA Clipper from Miami going down south along the coast as far as Buenos Aires and to the north to Miami. It is understandable that a connection with PAA at that point would create many new possibilities. Shortly after the SNIP's arrival in Curacao KLM contacted the authorities in Trinidad in connection with this matter, and most valuable assistance was rendered by Mr. J. F. Salazar, called "Chico" by everybody who knew him longer than two hours. This friendly gentleman had been local agent of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company for many years and through his excellent relations on the island and his personal enthusiasm for the promotion of KLM's interests, contributed greatly to the success of our business in Trinidad. It was discovered that sixteen miles from Port of Spain, on a sandy savannah near a village called Piarco, the French Aeropostale several years before had started the building of a runway



and had laid out a drainage system, which however proved to be entirely insufficient to cope with the torrential rainfall one encounters in Trinidad in the wet season.

It wasn't until four years later that KLM was able to inaugurate a regular service to Trinidad, and even then they often had difficulties with the condition of the field.

It should be pointed out here that KLM's position in the West Indies was in many respects different from other companies working in that region. At that time the enterprise was only a side-line of limited scope. It was purely an experiment and therefore the KLM Management could not afford to spend large sums of money for the construction of airfields, buildings and other non-transferrable facilities, especially for those on non-Dutch territory. It should be remembered that in Europe, to a great extent in the U. S. A. and in Asia, we were accustomed to the circumstance that the construction of airports, administration buildings, weather and radio facilities are paid for and maintained by the respective governments or municipalities, the airlines paying only a certain fixed rate for their use. Such a system involves no outlay of capital on the part of the airlines and induces them to open experimental routes. In the West Indies and South America conditions appeared to be quite different. It cost KLM much of its oratory talent and time to convince the authorities that it is only proper and in the end to the benefit of the countries themselves, that the commercial airports and their accessories are nationally owned; these facilities should not be in private hands, let alone be owned by foreigners.

Another point in the Caribbean in which KLM was much interested was the Island of Barbados. Barbados, 200 miles northeast of Trinidad, was the first point of call for several transatlantic shipping lines and up to this time had had no air service, notwithstanding a population of nearly 400,000 and its trade importance. The main reason for that was that Barbados does not possess a roadstead sufficiently sheltered to allow flying boats to land and take off without risk. Many months during the year there is a strong swell near the coast. PAA at that time operated in the neighborhood with flying boats only and therefore, even if they might have been interested in opening a line, they had no place to land. As mentioned before KLM intended to operate its schedules with land-planes, so that the establishment of a Trinidad-Barbados connection depended on the availability of a serviceable airport on the island. The selection of a suitable site was not an easy task. As far back as 1935 KLM's representatives had many talks on the subject with the authorities and various land-owners and



*Hooiberg, (hay stack), Aruba's highest mountain*



*Complete staff in June 1935, before Van Balkom's return to Holland. Seated, l. to r.: Mrs. Van Duuren (sec'y), Koot (ass't Mgr.), Capt. Van Balkom, Bouman (West Indies Mgr.), Van der Molen (radio-op.), Capt. Verhoeven, Miss Salas (stenog.); standing, l. to r.: Van Haaren (radio-op.), Dill (pilot), Hartog (enr.), Stolk (chief enr.), Plesman (enr.), Fernandez (passenger agent), Alexander (bus driver), Coffie (cleaner)*

made many exploratory trips over the island. The character of the soil and the geological formation of the island appeared to present various unexpected difficulties.

It needs no explanation as to why an eye was cast on Paramaribo. Though Curacao and Paramaribo in normal times had only few economic ties it was felt that the air connection between the two Netherlands countries in America was a thing that had to be accomplished. In any case this service had to be firmly established before our principal object, the mid-Atlantic service between Amsterdam and Curacao, via Paramaribo, could be realized. The airport problem in Surinam had not yet been definitely solved. The Zandery field was very far from town, but it was almost an airport created by God. Seldom could be found anywhere a site of such ample size, with such favorable soil conditions and such unobstructed surroundings, and that consequently required so little work to convert it into a first-class airport.

On the map on which KLM's projected lines were drawn there already appeared a dotted line from Curacao pointing sharp north to Haiti. There was a rather small airfield near the capital, Port au Prince. It was in use by PAA. On the map a very thin line projected to the northwest more than a thousand miles farther to Miami. However, that looked very far away in the spring of 1935, when there was only one plane, another of the same type on the way to Curacao by boat and, altogether, an organization of sixteen people, baggage boys and bus drivers included.

Captain Hondong went back to Holland in March 1935. He had had a bad attack of malaria; moreover it never had been contemplated to keep a veteran pilot of his experience permanently in the West Indies where, for the time being, there were only short routes to fly in almost constantly excellent weather conditions. Hondong's return over the Atlantic by boat was almost more hazardous than his westward trip on the SNIP. The ship in which he was traveling was hit by a terrific gale and a mammoth wave washing over the vessel almost turned it over. The doors of the smoking-room on the upper deck crashed in, most of the furniture was smashed and swept overboard. Hondong and the very few of his fellow passengers who still could hang onto their cigars, attached themselves to some banisters and thus were prevented from being tossed overboard in the same manner as the smoking-room chairs and other furniture.

### Liaison with the Home office

After Bouman's departure for the West Indies to become the first Manager in Curacao, the Special Operations Department in the home office in The Hague had been taken over by Mr. H. Duymaer van Twist. This department served as the liaison office between the Curacao operations center and the Management in Holland from 1934 until the occupation of the country by the Germans. Duymaer's perfect understanding of the situation and tactful handling of all affairs concerning the West Indies contributed largely to creating a state of sincere mutual confidence and pleasant cooperation between the home office and the Curacao Management.

*Difficult transport of the OEHOE from dock to Hato, June 12, 1935*



*The two main parts of the OEHOE on Hato. Construction of second hangar just started*



From Holland the KLM Management sent some younger men to replace the crew of the SNIP, because those veterans were more urgently required for the long Amsterdam-Batavia line. Successively there arrived a pilot, Th. Verhoeven, who, after Van Balkom departed in June 1935, became senior pilot. Verhoeven, a conscientious and capable aviator, had an active share in the pioneering work and in the organization of KLM's first lines in the West Indies.

J. Dill, also a pilot, arrived a little later but did not stay long, departing in the early part of the next year. In his place in December an American pilot, A. J. Viccellio, was engaged; in 1934 he was the pilot-engineer-dispatcher and maintenance man of a small Loening amphibian with which a garage owner in Aruba, not very successfully from a financial standpoint, tried to operate a regular air service from Aruba to Curacao. Viccellio stayed with KLM until September 1940; at that time he felt that he could better serve his own country by accepting a job in the U. S. A. He was a very cautious and able pilot and we were sorry to see him go.

In May engineer Stolk was replaced by Jan den Hartog, who remained in charge of the maintenance department until 1939. Under Hartog's leadership the technical department expanded considerably; his pride, that no flight ever had to be cancelled for technical reasons, was fully justified.

The successor to radio operator Van der Molen was Mr. R. van Haaren, a very skilled radio man as well as an able electrical engineer, who, up to this day, is in charge of the since tremendously grown radio department. We were very glad that after his first vacation in 1939 Van Haaren returned to Curacao; he has become one of KLM's West Indies most popular veterans. We wish to mention also an apprentice-mechanic, H. Bak, who was engaged in those early days, and who gradually worked his way up to a fully qualified flight-engineer.

When after only a short period it appeared that the air service between Curacao and Aruba was going to be a success, various steps in connection with the expansion of KLM's organization in Curacao became necessary. The remarkable fact, which after all was no surprise to the people with confidence in aviation's future, was that, though after the inauguration of this line the number of passengers by boat decreased slightly, the total number of people traveling between the two islands increased sharply. This is clearly demonstrated by the following figures: in 1934, before KLM came to Curacao, the number of boat passengers between Curacao and Aruba was 2625. In 1935 the number traveling by boat decreased to 1611, but 2659 took the plane, a total between the islands of 4270, or 63% increase.

## Fare policy

A fact that contributed to the popularity of the air service was the matter of fares. The steamship companies always had maintained comparatively high

fares in the Caribbean. Even at a 20% lower price than that of a steamship ticket, KLM would charge a higher rate per mile in the West Indies than they were accustomed to collecting in Europe. Of course expenses were higher too, but still there was a rather wide margin. However, it never had been the policy of KLM to induce a fare-war with other bona fide transportation companies and soon, under guidance of the Government, an agreement covering the fares was established. One complication arose because the shipping companies based their fares only partially on actual miles travelled; they took into account a multitude of other conditions as well. For instance, the steamship fare between Trinidad and Barbados was only 70% of the fare between Curacao and Aruba, whereas the distance was three times larger; this was equivalent to about one-fourth of the rate per mile. There were several other examples, but finally an agreement that covered practically all possible routes in the Caribbean was reached to the satisfaction of all parties, including our customers.

## More hangar space needed

A condition that needed improvement was the housing of the planes. That is to say, as soon as KLM decided to send over a second plane of the same type, an increase of hangar space became urgent. The Government of Curacao allowed a substantial sum of money for the construction of a suitable hangar of sufficient dimensions to house three planes of the size of the SNIP.

The original hangar, that only partly sheltered the SNIP, was gradually taken over for use as a passenger station, though the arrangements were made in such a way that one plane could always be stored in it in case of necessity.

On the Curacao Islands there is a condition which requires much extra precaution on the part of KLM's technical department. The main substance of the soil is a volcanic rock called diabase. Mixed with water or vapor diabase has an acid reaction. The engineers soon found that this tended to cause corrosion of the metal of the planes. It is a well known fact that automobiles have but a short life in Curacao because of this malicious condition. Many two-year-old cars could be seen driving around with fenders like sieves.

Curacao's Government engineers feared that this influence might also affect the metal hangar structure and it thus was decided to make the main beams of the new hangar of laminated wood, which at the time was very popular in Holland. The main span of the new hangar was 165 feet and its door-opening measured 130 x 22 feet. In the rear there were some simple workshops, dressing rooms and showers for the personnel and a stockroom. An asphalt concrete platform was built in front of both buildings and so gradually, toward the end of 1935, Hato began to look like a real airport.

Due to the steady direction of the trade winds the field in the beginning required only one landing strip, about 2500 feet long and 200 feet wide. For the Fokkers with their short take-off runs and low landing speed this was considered sufficient.

In the beginning the personnel was transported between city and airport in a very old and noisy passenger car, but gradually as it became necessary to provide transportation for the passengers, a second-hand Chevrolet bus was purchased, which served us for several years.

The bad condition of the dirt road between the town and the airport shortened the life of all motor equipment considerably; in the rainy season it happened more than once that our field tractor had to come to the rescue and drag the bus out of a slippery mud-hole.

As mentioned above the favorable prospects for development in the West Indies were soon realized by the KLM Management in The Hague, and a second F-18, PJ-AIO, or OEHOE (pronounced "Uh uh"), named after a species of owl, was dismantled, carefully greased, wrapped in burlap and sent to Curacao by freight. The OEHOE arrived in Curacao on July 10th, 1935 and with the skillful assistance of Shell Oil Company's stevedoring department was put on trolleys, one for the fuselage and one for the wing. The transportation of these parts over the then narrow dirt road to Hato, via some sharp curves, was quite an achievement, but finally they arrived safely. After two weeks of hard work by chief engineer Hartog and his small but zealous technical staff, the OEHOE was ready to fly. Pilot Verhoeven took her up for a test flight and KLM's people in Curacao were quite proud of their two F-18s; they felt much safer with a spare plane. Unfortunately this didn't last very long. Early in August, just after starting his engines to leave Aruba, the junior pilot, wholly inexplicably, did something wrong, with the result that the proud OEHOE, with quite some speed, threw its tail high into the air, and plowed its nose into the rocky soil of the Aruba runway. The wings and the engines fortunately were intact, but the nose and the front motor were severely cracked up. The damage, after careful examination, appeared to be such that engineer Hartog considered repairs in Aruba or Curacao impossible and we had to ship the fuselage all the way back to KLM's main repair base in Amsterdam. The wings were kept in Aruba under an ingeniously constructed shelter. Unfortunately this incident compelled us to suspend the Curacao-Aruba service completely for ten days; the SNIP had just been taken in the workshop for a complete overhaul; this job had to be rushed in order to avoid a long delay in the resumption of the schedule. It was November 1935 before the repaired fuselage was back in Aruba, and a week later the plane took the air again. It has never failed us since that time. There was, however, one difference; the ship had been renamed ORIOL, clinging to KLM's tradition of giving all its planes the name of a bird, begin-

ning with the same letter of the alphabet as the last one of its international registration mark. When the OEHOE arrived in Curacao the first time there were some people who seemed to be a little hesitant about flying in it. The OEHOE, or "Owl," you know, is not a symbol of wisdom but an omen of bad-luck with some of the old Caribbean Indian tribes and, when the OEHOE ignominiously stood on its nose, though nobody was hurt, the same people said: "There you are; I thought something would happen with that plane." That is why the OEHOE's name was changed to ORIOL, and after that this bird became as popular as the faithful SNIP.

Aruba's new airfield had been completed during the first half of 1935. It also consisted of a single strip, rather short, only 2000 feet long and about 600 feet wide. It would have been a difficult and expensive undertaking to build a longer runway in Aruba. Much later, in 1945, under the pressure of the war, this was accomplished. Since in 1935 the Government could not provide the money for a station building, KLM decided to undertake that itself and after a few months a nice little building was completed. It was planned in such a way that it later could be extended in the event the traffic flow demanded more space. This condition arose very shortly afterwards and within a year the floor space of the building was enlarged to almost twice its original size. The cool bar in that building also proved to be a point of interest and attracted the many people who sped along the field in their cars between Oranjestad, the capital of the Island, and St. Nicholaas, the oil town at its eastern end.

## Venezuela contract still pending

The schedule remained fundamentally the same all through the year. Because of the increased demand for space two more services were added, so that there were now six scheduled flights a week between Curacao and Aruba. Later this was reduced to five but a service on Saturdays was included to promote week-end trips, a novel feature for the people of those islands. The planned extension to Venezuela, however, was still impossible. The progress with our coveted contract was very slow, notwithstanding long and amiable conferences with the authorities. At the end of 1935 Bakker and our able lawyer in Venezuela, Dr. Enrique Hermoso Dominquez, expected an early agreement, but then came the sudden death of President Gomez, followed by a relatively calm revolution. Anyway, most members of the Gomez Government had to resign, new officials stepped in. That meant that we practically had to start negotiations all over again. The whole matter was complicated by the fact that at first civil aviation affairs were managed by the Departamento de Fomento; a few months later they were transferred to the newly created Departamento de Comunicaciones; consequently we had to deal with new Ministers and

other officials. This department changed its Ministers three times in five months—not a condition conducive to expeditious settling of matters. Though these people were all helpful and willing to speed up our affairs, there were so many changes in their own organization that we at times became desperate. However, Bakker's spirit tided us over even the crucial moment, when everything seemed settled, and the control of commercial aviation was shifted from Comunicaciones to Guerra or War department. At that time the Minister of War was Col. Isaias Medina, now President of the Republic. KLM always will be thankful for the cooperation received from the Departamento de Guerra, not only from Col. Medina himself, but from his subordinate officials as well.

### Photographic work

Following the example of the photographic department in Holland, KLM tried to obtain orders for air photographs. A series of air views was delivered to the Curacao Government, as well as to several private companies, mostly for publicity purposes. The lack of specialized personnel and equipment, however, prevented us from accepting orders for aerial survey work on a large scale.

### Traffic results in 1935

In the first year of operations, 1935, KLM carried between Curacao and Aruba 2,659 revenue passengers; for the greater part of the year we operated with only one plane, which flew a total of 40,690 miles and made 471 trips between the two islands. The number of passenger miles in that year was 216,000; the freight and excess baggage carried amounted to 18,761 pounds, and we also carried a total of 675 pounds of airmail. The freight consisted of the most diver-

sified articles; there were regular shipments of newspapers, movie films, and during a few months even fresh fish!

On December 31st the entire personnel numbered sixteen people; nine had come over from Holland, the others had been engaged locally.



*Hangar No. 2 is gradually proceeding, August 1935*



*KLM station building at Aruba airport, September 1935*



*The SNIP flying over Willemstad, Curacao*



*The principal town of Aruba, Oranjestad*

# 1936

## Special flights to Coro

Late in 1935 inquiries were received from the KLM agent in Coro, a little harbor town not far from Cumarebo. Apparently the inhabitants of Coro, because they had practically no means of communication other than by coastal schooners, were interested in flying over to Curacao to shop in the well-stocked Willemstad stores. The formalities to obtain permission for a limited number of special flights, in conformity with Venezuelan air laws, were very simple as compared with those for a permanent concession. Soon thereafter the SNIP and the ORIOL made several trips to Coro, entirely filled with local residents who, on the return trip, were loaded with their newly acquired purchases. The willingness of the Venezuelan Government to grant permission for these flights, even when they became frequent, led us to apply for permits for special trips twice a week from Curacao to Maracaibo. Of course a specific application had to be made for every flight, about a month in advance, but this finally became such a routine procedure that, as of July 1st, 1936, KLM felt justified in boldly announcing a regular twice-weekly service between Curacao and Maracaibo.

## Regular service to Maracaibo

Thus KLM's first international service in the West Indies came into being. The schedule from then on showed three purely local round-trips between Curacao and Aruba and two services, Curacao-Aruba-Maracaibo and back each week. The activities in Maracaibo in connection with passenger ticket sales and dispatch were undertaken by the agency of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company, which had at its disposal the necessary office facilities and sufficient personnel, fully acquainted with the rather intricate customs and immigration formalities in Venezuela. Most of the time this office, since KLM has maintained a service to Maracaibo, has been under the supervision of Mr. D. van der Kaay, who deserves great credit for the manner in which he always handled KLM's business in Maracaibo. Besides that we appointed in Maracaibo our own station manager, Mr. Herbert Fowler, who served the company for many years and whose pleasing personality made him most popular with our passengers. He had the advantage of having been born in Venezuela, of having had part of his education in the United States and part in the Netherlands, so that he spoke those three languages fluently.

In April 1936 an agents' instruction book for the West Indies was published, containing a general resume of everything agents in that territory should know about the organization of KLM, the dispatch and handling of the planes, tickets, reservations, etc., etc. The compilation of all such details, especially when it has to be done for the first time, requires a lot of patience and devotion on the part of its authors.

It was about the same time, to our great rejoicing, that we were notified that the proposed contract with Venezuela had been approved by that Government and that it had only to go before the Congress for ratification, a matter considered to be a mere formality. This "formality" however, took several months and it was not until December 19, 1936, after some controversial questions had been ironed out, that the contract was finally declared in force. A new edition of the Venezuelan Air Law, published in the second half of the year, obliged us to make last minute revisions in the agreement, just at a moment when it was thought the contract was in its final form.

## Relations with Haiti

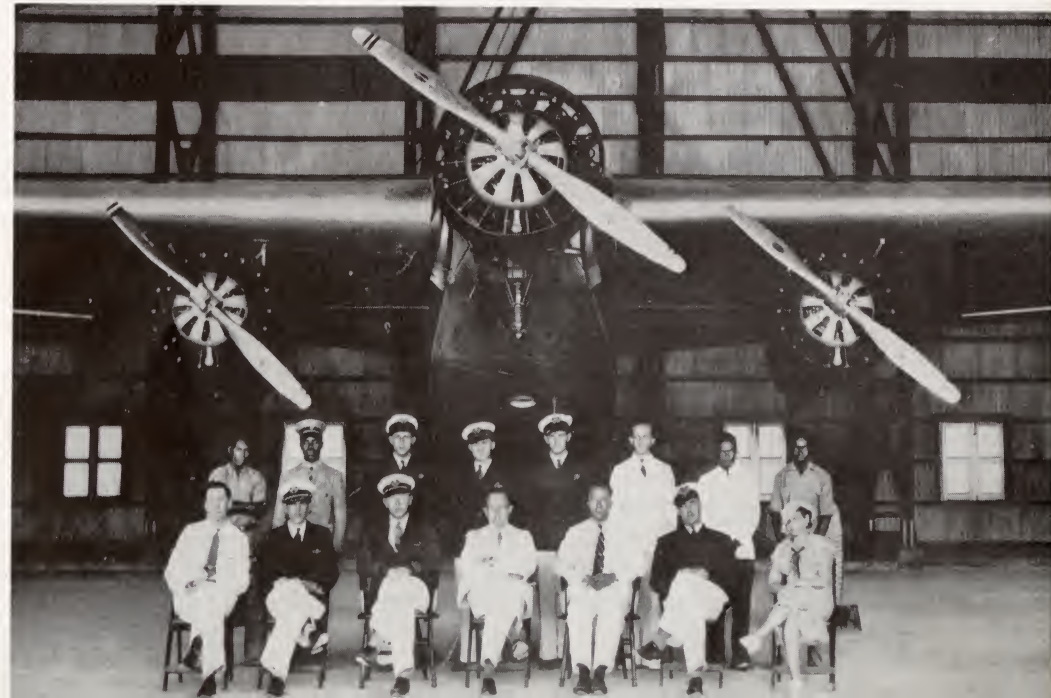
In the same year of 1936 KLM scored another diplomatic success, though the practical results became apparent only several years later. It has already been mentioned that KLM was considering a service from Curacao, straight north across the Caribbean to Haiti. Recalling the rather long-delayed progress in Venezuela it was deemed advisable to start negotiations with the Haitian Government as early as possible, so that KLM would be in possession of the desired concession as soon as sufficient equipment and personnel became available. This was expected to be the case at the end of 1937.

In Curacao we had made the acquaintance of Mr. Ernesto Martyn, head of one of Curacao's most successful private business concerns. Mr. Martyn was Consul-General of Haiti in Curacao; he had excellent connections in that country. With the existing contract between PAA and the Haitian Government as a guide and the assistance of a well known lawyer in that place, Bouman, on a visit to Port au Prince, drafted a contract for KLM. Martyn introduced Bouman personally to the President, to all members of the Cabinet and many other officials who had to do with civil aviation. These discussions resulted in the filing of an official application the following day and, believe it or not, only a few weeks later, on August 7, 1936, the contract was approved by Parliament. This agreement, however, contained a clause, understandable from the viewpoint of the Haitian Government, that they would be entitled to revoke the

*KLM staff in Curacao in March 1936: 1st row: Traffic Mgr. Beaujon, pilot Viccellio, Capt. Verhoeven, Bouman, Koot, chief-engr. Hartog, Miss Salas; 2nd row: Coffie, Alexander, flight-engr. H. Plesman, Van Haaren, C. Plesman, clerk A. Polvliet, waiter De Windt, baggage boy Castro*



*The second hangar is completed. In front the two Fokker planes SNIP and ORIOL, June 1936*



permission granted for the service in case KLM did not actually start its airline within two years. Not being able to inaugurate the service in 1958 the concession was renewed for another period of two years. When this term expired Holland had become a belligerent, and the Haitian Government did not deem it desirable to extend the agreement at that time. Nevertheless KLM's friendly relations with Haiti were very useful, for at any time when new equipment was ferried over from the United States, we would always be assured of a permit to make an intermediate landing at the airport of Port au Prince.

In March 1956 another technician came from Holland, Mr. H. C. Plesman, brother of Kees Plesman who was already in Curacao when the SNIP arrived. As a flight engineer Henk Plesman made hundreds of flights over the Caribbean, and with his colleagues he often worked for many hours at night, after returning from his trips, to have the equipment ready for the next morning. He is one of those conscientious and reliable fellows on whom so much depends for the regular operation of an air service. He is still in Curacao and for the benefit of the West Indies section it is hoped he will remain there for a long time.

In April Mr. H. Garschagen arrived, who was appointed Station Manager in Aruba. Later he temporarily succeeded Fowler in Maracaibo. Eventually he became assistant-representative in Port of Spain.

In that same period the negotiations with the Governments of Trinidad and Barbados were resumed. For the final decision these matters had to be referred to the British Government through the regular diplomatic channels. The decision came in 1957.

## Cooperating with PAA

As soon as the service was extended to Venezuela the connection with Pan American Airlines, especially in view of a fast air through-service to and from the United States, became important. Of course there were many matters, such as the use of exchange orders, manifests, the through dispatch of airmail, mutual publicity, and so forth which had to be settled with that company; for this purpose Bouman had already, early in 1955, been at PAA's head office in New York to discuss such matters. Another subject demanding consideration was the use of the airfield Maiquetia in La Guaira which, contrary to the field Grano de Oro in Maracaibo which was owned by the Venezuelan Government, was the property of and operated by PAA. Frankly speaking, the fee PAA asked from KLM for the landings on the La Guaira field seemed very high, used as we were to different standards; but there was no other solution than to agree.

## Discussions in Europe

After the negotiations with Venezuela had virtually been concluded and the future of the originally planned air connections from Curacao seemed assured,

it was decided that Bouman should go back to the home office of KLM in The Hague to discuss future developments with the Management. A decision had to be made in connection with the purchase of new equipment for the West Indies, with due regard to the fact that still several of the places which KLM wished to include in its schedule had no airfields, only seaplane facilities. The next extension which KLM planned, to the British West Indies, had to be taken up with the Air Ministry in London. And in the future loomed the probability of the establishment of the Atlantic air service from Amsterdam, via Lisbon and the Cape Verde Islands, to Paramaribo and Curacao.

Bouman left Curacao in August 1956; during his absence the management of the West Indies section was taken over by Mr. H. Steensma, one of the Netherlands' first naval pilots and an aircraft engineer from the earliest days of military aviation in Holland.

## Bonaire gets an airfield

In the course of 1956 the projected airfield on the third island of the group, Bonaire, was completed. At that time we could not visualize that only a few years later, mainly due to the war conditions, there would be a regular service several times a week to an island where, in 1956, only half a dozen white families and a few thousand natives lived their simple lives. However, the presence of the airport in Bonaire proved most useful several times in 1956. Shortly after its completion the SNIP carried a very sick man from the small local hospital to Curacao for an emergency operation; later, on three or four other occasions, a life was saved because of this rapid transportation, which made it possible to get a patient from his bed in Bonaire to an operating table in Curacao in barely an hour.

## Traffic results in 1956

In 1956 a total of 5491 passengers was carried, of which 2837 travelled between Curacao and Aruba and 564 between Curacao and Maracaibo, during the six months that the latter service was in operation. On special flights to and from Coro travelled no less than 250 passengers; to and from Bonaire 112. The number of passenger miles increased to 325,000; freight and excess baggage went up considerably to 45,661 pounds, and the quantity of airmail was more than twice that of 1955, being 1617 pounds.

In the first part of 1956 large consignments of fresh fish were again being shipped by air from Aruba to Curacao, but in the second half of the year several schooners plying between those two islands were specially equipped for the transportation of perishable goods and from then on the dealers could no longer afford to pay the comparatively high air freight.



When it was discovered that the objection quite a few persons had to traveling by plane was the limited amount of baggage they could take with them, the free allowance was increased from 35 to 66 pounds. This measure proved an inducement to many people to take the plane who otherwise would have chosen to go by boat.

At the instigation of KLM, who consented to the lowering of the payment for transportation of airmail between the islands, the Government decided to fix a considerably lower and more simplified postal rate; this visibly stimulated the use of the airmail between the islands.

As yet there was only a slight increase in our aerial photography activities. Quite a number of oblique pictures were taken for publicity purposes and a large order was completed for the Eagle Oil Company of Aruba.

At the end of 1936 there were 22 people in KLM's service in Curacao, of which eight had been transferred from Holland. Only eight years later it would be ten times as many.

It would be a grave omission should we forget to mention in our story the indispensable assistance, friendly cooperation and sincere interest KLM received in its early days of pioneering in the West Indies from the authorities in Curacao; to begin with the Governors during that period, first His Excellency J. van Slobbe and later His Excellency G. J. Wouters. It is hardly possible to mention all the Government Officials with whom we had to deal. Without any exception they were always willing to help and advise us. We feel obliged to make a few exceptions in the case of those officials especially charged with some

duties in connection with aviation. In the first place, Commander W. Gauw, Harbor Master of Curacao, a former Netherlands naval air pilot, who was charged with the control of civil aviation in Curacao, should be mentioned. We believe the greatest tribute we can pay to him is to say that his "control" in the strict sense of the word was hardly perceptible. It was in fact a most helpful and amiable attitude, combined with well-meant counsel. Whenever possible he smoothed the way for KLM in many difficult situations. Commander Gauw left his position in Curacao in 1945, after nine years' close association with the West Indies section.

We also want to mention the Directors of Public Works and their able and hard-working deputies in Curacao and the other islands, who were responsible for the construction of the airfields in Netherlands territory in the Caribbean and the many improvements during the course of the years, the various buildings, hangars, roads and aprons. More than once in an emergency the construction of certain projects was completed in a very short time, unbelievable to those who are familiar with working conditions in the tropics.

KLM also owes very much to the Directors of the Government Radio Services in Curacao as well as in Surinam. Curacao gradually became a junction of various frequent airlines and it demanded great skill and devotion of the Director and his staff of engineers and operators to keep pace with the fast development of aviation radio communication. When KLM came to Curacao the conditions in this respect were primitive; from a detail which could then be handled between other duties, it has become a highly specialized organization on which the safety and regularity of the air services entirely depend.

*Original airfield on Bonaire, end of 1936*



*Kralendyk, Bonaire*



*The SNIP on Bonaire for a charter flight*



During those days in Curacao there was no physician on the island who was qualified and had the necessary special equipment at his disposal to carry out the medical examinations required for flying personnel. An arrangement was therefore made whereby our pilots could undergo these examinations at the United States Army Air Base at Cristobal, in the Canal Zone. We greatly appreciated the cooperation received from all the authorities concerned with this set-up.

There is another thing for which KLM has to thank the Curacao Government and especially the Colonial Council, the majority of whom are elected by the people of Curacao. Contrary to some foreign companies who operate under similar conditions, KLM has no fixed airmail contracts that will give a guarantee of a certain minimum revenue. Pioneering in airlines has always been an expensive business. The Government of Curacao recognized the importance of creating an adequate transportation system by air. Besides taking care of the construction of airports and quite a number of other facilities, they also appeared to appreciate the financial difficulties that KLM was encountering, particularly during the depression years. As the result of a request made by KLM, the Government granted a subsidy of 50,000 Guilders (about \$26,000) over 1936, to absorb part of the operating loss. This subsidy was increased to 56,000 Guilders in 1937 and was continued up to and including the year 1941. Since that year the KLM West Indies fortunately has been self-supporting.

Later, the Surinam Government showed its interest in KLM's developments by granting a guaranteed minimum airmail revenue, as of the opening of the direct airline between Curacao and Paramaribo in 1939.

# 1937

## La Guaira service started

Steensma was in charge when the final contract with Venezuela went into effect. This enabled him to inaugurate the new La Guaira line on January 19, 1937, exactly two years after the opening of KLM's first service in the West Indies. This service was operated twice weekly; at the same time the Maracaibo service was increased to three trips per week, whereas the local Curacao-Aruba-Curacao service was flown five times a week, as previously. Charter flights were continued to Coro and Bonaire. On all lines there was a steady increase of traffic.

During that year there were not many changes in the staff and everything moved along smoothly in expectation of the decision concerning the plans for the future, which were being drawn up at the home office in The Hague.

## New planes for Curacao are ordered

In the spring of 1937 the Board of KLM decided to order a batch of the then new Lockheed Superlectra twin-engine 10-passenger planes, with a cruising speed of 200 miles. Originally two, of a total of six to be ordered for KLM, were destined for Curacao. Later, however, when it became certain that extension of the lines to Barranquilla, Trinidad and Barbados and later Paramaribo would be possible, this number was increased to three. The markings

*A jazz-band flies from Maracaibo to Curacao*



*Improved passenger facilities in the station hall*



*The enlarged station building at Aruba airport*



assigned to these planes were PJ-AIK, PJ-AIP and PJ-AIT and it was decided to give them names of West Indies birds respectively: KOLIBRIE (Humming Bird), PARKIET (Parakeet) and TROEPIAAL (Trupial). In the spring of 1938, when these first three planes were delivered, the KLM Management decided to send another Lockheed to Curacao, the PJ-AIM, which was christened MEEUW (Seagull).

In the meantime various discussions took place at the British Air Ministry, in connection with the proposed service to Trinidad and Barbados. Several conferences had previously been held with the Governors of those islands, and keen interest was shown in KLM's plans.

### Agreement with the British

In principle an agreement was reached in February 1937; the official concession was granted on June 6th. It had been decided that the Government of Barbados would construct an airport as part of its unemployment program; further that Trinidad would develop its land airport plan and that, after completion of these projects, KLM would be permitted to run a regular air service between Curacao and Trinidad, from Trinidad to Paramaribo and also from Trinidad to Barbados. The latter concession, however, was subject to the condition that local traffic between the two British territories could only be carried by KLM as long as no British company undertook to do this.

### Trinidad's airport problems

As regards Trinidad, for some time there had been a difference of opinion in interested circles concerning the locality of the new airport. The old Piarco

savannah where, as already mentioned, the French Aeropostale a few years before had started but shortly afterwards abandoned the construction of a field, offered ample possibilities for extensions. It was naturally flat and its main length was in the direction of the prevailing winds. In view of the heavy rains to be expected the drainage system would have to be improved and extended considerably. The field was covered with high, rather strong grass, which could withstand the wheel pressure of medium planes, provided the soil was sufficiently drained. The disadvantage was the long distance from Port of Spain and the narrow road, especially the last 15 miles of the total of 24, so that a ride from town took at least an hour. There were no buildings as yet on the field, no electricity; not even a telephone line.

The Trinidad Government had already worked a long time on a far-sighted plan in connection with the development of shipping facilities. Combined with this plan was the construction of a modern land and sea airport, the field itself for the greater part created by filling up marshes with sand excavated from the new harbor. This Mucurapo plan was undoubtedly a daring project; it would provide many facilities and be very close to the city. Its only disadvantages were the limited areas available for future extensions, the long time that would elapse before the soil had sufficiently settled to allow the construction of concrete runways, and its very high cost. We believe that those reasons, and also the unquiet international situation which prompted the Government to have at least one airfield completed as soon as possible, compelled the authorities to drop the Mucurapo project.

After this decision had been taken in the beginning of 1938 the improvements on Piarco were taken in hand.

*SNIP and ORIOL at Hato, July 1937*



*Flaming Flamingos on Bonaire*



*Fresh flowers from Caracas*





*The ORIOL takes a full load for La Guaira*

## Additions and improvements

During the time Steensma was in charge in Curacao the engineering department underwent several extensions, for which his experience in this branch was of the greatest value.

In June 1937 Bouman returned to Curacao and took over the management from Steensma, who then went back to Holland. On his return trip he paid a visit to the Cape Verde Islands, with a view to the future use of these Atlantic outposts for KLM's contemplated Amsterdam-Paramaribo line.

Late in 1937 the passenger facilities in the original hangar on the Hato field were considerably enlarged; gradually the airport became a favorite place for people who came for a cold drink in a cool and breezy spot and enjoyed watching the planes come and go.

A great relief to the airport staff was the fence that was erected around the entire field. In Curacao there is a surplus of wild donkeys and goats and, heedless of the roar of the plane engines those irresponsible animals seemed to be very fond of wandering around and staying stubbornly in the center of the runway just when the planes intended to take off or to glide in for a landing. Before the fence was erected the ground crews time and again had to man trucks and jump into private cars to chase the beasts out of the danger zone. This trouble was over now.

The Chevrolet bus finally began to suffer from the bad road and old age. It was decided to order a large new bus for transportation of the passengers, as well as a smaller bus for personnel.

In September a new hard-paved road between town and the airport was opened making it possible to reach Hato in 15 minutes from the center of the city in comfort.

On Aruba the coastal radio station was originally used for communication with the planes, but after some time it became insufficient for this purpose. A new radio station was built near the airport. Two radio masts were erected on the north side of the field and a small radio transmitter and gasoline generator were installed in a little structure next to the station building.

At Maracaibo the Venezuelan Government constructed an excellent hangar and not long after they started the building of a modern terminal as well as hard-surfaced runways on the field. At the same time PAA began the improvement and extension of their field in La Guaira, which was not entirely reliable under adverse weather conditions. Thus, at all the places where KLM regularly landed the air fields gradually were so improved that they were usable in all kinds of weather.

In the month of June KLM reached an agreement with PAA and the Royal Netherlands Shipping Company whereby pleasure trips, partly by boat and partly by plane, were offered from Curacao to Costa Rica. Many people availed themselves of these pleasant and inexpensive trips and thus had the opportunity of visiting this beautiful Central American country with its high mountains, cool climate and the lush vegetation, so entirely different from Curacao and Aruba.

In the summer of 1937 KLM was confronted with a disappointing decision. The application to the United States Government to permit extension of the air service from Curacao via Haiti to Miami was rejected "for the time being." This refusal was rather unexpected, since as early as 1929 a U. S. company, the Pan American Airways, was allowed to land at Paramaribo, in Netherlands territory; moreover PAA had permission to land in Curacao and had already used that field temporarily, withdrawing only on its own initiative. It wasn't until 1945, as a result of the shortage of transportation caused by the war and after a general invitation from the United States Government, that KLM was finally permitted to fly to Miami and so was allowed to set foot on U. S. soil.

## Colombian developments

On the other hand, just before the end of 1936 KLM had succeeded in obtaining permission from the Colombian Government to operate a line from Curacao to Barranquilla. The old Soledad place had been converted into a very good airport.

In view of future plans KLM wanted to make itself known to the authorities and aviation circles in Barranquilla and therefore, in August 1937 a special flight was made to Barranquilla, the crew this time being Captain Verhoeven, engineer Plesman and radio operator Van Haaren. Bouman joined the party. At Soledad airport there was a hearty reception by Colombian authorities and airline officials; present also was almost the entire Netherlands colony. The crew admired the well-paved runways, the excellently planned station building, the modern control tower, and the roomy hangar and workshops. Again, it was like two years earlier in Venezuela—a most cordial welcome with friendly speeches. They became acquainted with the magnificent Prado Hotel which, they had to confess, contrasted sharply with what they were accustomed to in Curacao. The visit lasted only a few hours, but it laid a sound foundation for future relations with the Republic of Colombia.

During its negotiations in Colombia KLM was very ably assisted by Mr. Pietersz, a Curacao born Dutchman, head of the Curacao Trading Company in Colombia. He and his deputy, Mr. Van der Veen Zeppenfeldt, have done a lot to establish KLM in that country. We would like to add here that the Curacao Trading Company, headquarters of which were at Amsterdam until the outbreak of the war and now at Curacao, has done everything possible to foster KLM's interests in all places in the West Indies where this company has its branches. The Management of Curacao Trading Company apparently has the talent to pick for their local managers the most intelligent and hard-working businessmen, upon whose cooperation KLM could always depend. Since 1937 in La Guaira the Curacao Trading Company has been charged with the handling of KLM's planes and has fulfilled this task to our entire satisfaction. In Paramaribo it was also the Curacao Trading Company who became KLM's agents and had a big share in its development in that territory. Their Manager, Mr. C. P. de Graaf, from the very beginning was an enthusiastic promoter of commercial aviation and of KLM in particular. Much later, when KLM opened a service to Ciudad Trujillo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, it again was the Curacao Trading Company who looked after its interests.

Another valued concession, which will be of the greatest importance to KLM's future development, was also authorized in 1937. That was the permission of the Portuguese Government to establish a service from Holland via Lisbon and the Cape Verde Islands to Paramaribo. In January of that year Mr. Reyers of KLM's foreign department, together with Mr. Bouman, had paid a visit to Lisbon and discussed KLM's projects with the Portuguese authorities; later Mr. Steensma visited Portugal too. For this purpose further negotiations followed, and it was not long before official permission was granted. So, with the exception of the Miami disappointment, the year 1937 brought to KLM several potentialities needed for the realization of its objectives in the West.



*The SNIP on the newly completed airfield in Barranquilla, August 1937*

In the last quarter of 1937 it became known that the delivery of the first Lockheed could be expected by the end of February 1938. One of the first extensions on the program, as mentioned before, was Barranquilla.

KLM would have liked to include Trinidad and Barbados as well, but the improvement of Piarco, though well on its way, took time. The progress on the spot selected for the Barbados airport, Seawell, was rather slow, which was mainly due to the fact that it was part of the Government's unemployment program; in order to make it as beneficial as possible to a great number of people, the plan called for the grading and all other work to be done exclusively by hand and mule cart. It can be understood that it takes quite some time to level four 5,000 feet long and 280 feet wide runways. Countless depressions and holes caused by crevices in the rock, often 60 to 100 feet in diameter and up to 10 feet deep, had to be filled with small pieces of rock which had to be brought from other parts of the field, in some instances half a mile away. Fortunately, by applying more modern methods, the pace was accelerated later.

Two young but experienced pilots were assigned for duty in the West Indies. The first was Carl Rupplin, who arrived in October 1937, and a little later

Pieter Andre de la Porte, who came in December of that year. Rupplin was sent over in a hurry because of the illness of Captain Verhoeven. The latter's designated term was not entirely over, but he had unfortunately contracted a bad infection in his leg and the doctors ordered him to rest for more than a month, after which they advised him to leave the tropics as soon as possible. We were sorry to see Verhoeven go. For several weeks pilot Viccellio had to fly the complete schedule alone and he executed the job admirably. Another skilled engineer also arrived from Holland, Mr. P. J. Slimmers, followed shortly afterwards by I. van't Riet. Earlier in the year another radio operator, Mr. Spanjaard, had joined the flying staff. These three men are still in Curacao; they belong to the real old-timers of the West Indies section.

In September 1937 the first professional accountant in Curacao had arrived from Holland, Mr. L. C. Zonruiter, who since has been in charge of the financial and personnel departments. In these capacities Zonruiter has constantly been the "right-hand" of the General Manager; his skill and devotion have contributed much to the efficiency of the West Indies division. Zonruiter, after thorough preparation at the home office in Holland, set up an entirely new administration system, which has proven to be of the greatest value.

### Traffic results in 1937

During 1937 there was a substantial increase in traffic. The total number of passengers rose from 3,491 in 1936 to 5,893 in 1937. It is interesting to note that KLM's customers were of 34 different nationalities. The greatest number was Dutch, with 2500; next Venezuelans with 1500; after that Americans with 750,

and 600 Britishers. More than 100 were Polish, French or German. The airnet now measured 437 miles as against 254 miles in 1936 and 81 miles in 1935. The number of miles flown as well as the figure for the passenger miles sold both more than doubled to 142,970 and 826,000; freight and excess baggage increased to 89,566 pounds. The greatest rise proportionately was in the airmail carried, as a result of improved connections with the U. S. It was more than four times the quantity in 1936 and amounted to 6,846 pounds. A great variety of merchandise was hauled between the various stations. Between Curacao and Aruba newspapers played a big part. From the cool mountain regions of Venezuela fresh cut flowers were sent to Curacao in increasing quantities.

On the last day of 1937 a third plane arrived in Curacao by boat. This twin-engine Fokker F-8 transport, which, equipped for twelve passengers, had rendered faithful service for many years on the Amsterdam-London line, had been converted into a photographic laboratory. KLM, due to its long experience with aerial survey work, had secured an important order on behalf of the oil develop-ments in Trinidad.



*Reception for the SNIP in Barranquilla, August 1937; front row, second from left, Mr. Van der Veen Zeppenfeldt, ass't mgr. of Curacao Trading Co.; Mr. Hart, Netherlands' Consul; Verhoeven, Bouman, Van Haaren, Plesman*

*Grading the airport in Barbados*



*Maracaibo's modern station building*

1938

## The Lockheeds are coming

KLM's Management in The Hague had assigned Captain Geysendorffer, whom we already mentioned on page five, to carry out the test flights of the new Superlectras in California. He also was to be in charge of the ferry flights of the first two Lockheeds to Curacao. After his arrival he was to instruct the other pilots in the handling of these fast planes, with their retracting landing gears, Fowler flaps, automatic pilots, variable pitch propellers and many other gadgets, a hundred times more complicated than our faithful, but so much slower Fokkers. With Captain Geysendorffer came engineer Mr. B. Prins, who had been a member of Captain Parmentier's crew in the Melbourne race and who spent considerable time at the Lockheed factory to get thoroughly acquainted with the intricate mechanism of our new acquisitions. Prins, by the way, became Curacao's chief engineer in February 1938; his predecessor Hartog left KLM's service in October. Prins remained in this responsible position until 1940, when he joined the Netherlands Indies Military Air Force as an inspector. He now serves overseas with the rank of First Lieutenant. KLM West Indies is most appreciative of Prins' share in the planning and extension of its technical department. His never failing humor and ability to handle the many difficult situations with his largely increased staff, was always of great benefit to the spirit and morale of the entire department.

Mr. Van der Kolk, the radio operator, had had ample time to familiarize himself at the factory with the Bendix radio and the electrical system of the Lockheeds. Originally a military pilot, he served several years as a radio operator-navigator in Curacao. However, after some time he was allowed to continue his training as a transport pilot. He passed his examinations successfully and for the last three years Van der Kolk has been regularly acting as a line pilot in the West Indies.

Accompanied by an engineer of the factory Geysendorffer set out from Hollywood and arrived at Hato with the first Lockheed, PJ-AIP, PARKIET on February 20th, after a seven and a half hour flight for the last lap from Miami to Curacao.

Geysendorffer and his crew then returned to the United States and came back a few days later with the second Lockheed, the PJ-AIT, TROEPIAAL. From then on a period of extensive training followed for the other KLM pilots as well as for the mechanics, in order to get fully acquainted with the new equipment.



*Along the rocky north coast of Curacao*

At that time we were very glad that plans had been made for the extensions of schedules in so cautious a manner because, as experience had taught us, sometimes in a hard way, quite a few little but annoying troubles often develop with a new type of plane as soon as it has been put into regular service.

### Regular service to Coro inaugurated

First on the program in 1938 was a regular service to Coro, in Venezuela, instead of the frequent charter flights of the previous years. This line was opened on March 14th, 1938 with a once-weekly trip.

In April, after sufficient experience had been gained with the Lockheeds, they were first assigned to the shorter runs, Curacao to Aruba and Coro. But before putting them into regular service KLM wanted to formally introduce them to the public at Hato. So a reception was arranged; government authorities and many other prominent people were invited to step in and enjoy a flight in a fully modern plane. Some obviously preferred the high airy, though noisy cabin of the old Fokker. It was only after they had to travel distances of five hundred or more miles that most of the passengers apparently began to appreciate the advantages of the gain in speed.

A month later the PARKIET met with a mishap; something went wrong with the brakes during the landing at Aruba. Pilot de la Porte handled the plane as best he could, but a locked brake made the ship swerve around, one of the legs of the undercarriage gave way, the propeller hit the ground. Altogether so much damage was done that, to our deep regret, it was necessary

to send the PARKIET to the factory for repairs. It was dismantled on the Aruba airfield and hoisted aboard a tanker going to California.

We have already mentioned the corrosive effect of the air in Curacao, which could not do much harm to the wooden wings of our Fokkers. However, this influence soon became visible on the aluminum skin of the Lockheeds. Therefore the factory strongly advised us to sacrifice the glamorous look of the glossy aluminum and give them a double coating of anti-corrosive paint, inside and out, "the sooner the better." It was decided that not only the PARKIET should be treated in this way during its repair, but the other three planes as well.

### Engine overhaul problems

An insider in aviation might ask, "How did you manage to overhaul your engines?" As a matter of fact we didn't. After careful analysis of the problem, KLM had come to the conclusion that as long as the total number of flying hours per month in Curacao remained below a certain figure, it would be preferable technically and more economical to send the engines due for complete overhaul (500 to 600 hours in the air) by fast steamer to the central repair shops of KLM in Amsterdam. At Schiphol KLM boasted one of the largest and best equipped engine overhaul shops in all Europe, manned by Holland's most skilled and experienced technicians. Thus, on the debit side of the account was entered the engines that were on their way to Curacao or going back to Holland, plus the cost of transportation; while on the credit side the entry showed the ideal conditions for overhaul in Amsterdam, thus shorter time for completion of the

The first Lockheed on Hato airport, February 20, 1938



Capt. Geysendorffer stepping from PARKIET at Hato, February 19, 1938; l. to r.: Lockheed engineer; flight-engr. Prins, radio-op. Van der Kolk, Geysendorffer, Bouman



After arrival of first Lockheed; l. to r.: Charles Maduro, Geysendorffer





work and lower cost; moreover it offered a better opportunity to have improved parts installed when desirable. We had calculated, however, that, provided we were able to carry out the original program for the extension of the lines, by about mid 1940 the number of flying hours would have increased to such an extent that it would be of advantage to do the complete overhaul in KLM's own workshops in Curacao. The same conditions applied to propellers and some of the flight instruments. The expansion of the technical department was based on this calculation and preparations were taken in hand in conformity with this plan.

### Barranquilla included in the schedules

On May 16th the regular service to Barranquilla, via Maracaibo, was inaugurated. To our disappointment the prospects for this line were not as bright as they had been a few years ago. In the first place the local traffic between the Netherlands West Indies and Colombia had lately dropped considerably. One of the other reasons for which KLM had always been anxious to fly to Barranquilla was to create a fast through-traffic connection to Miami. But shortly before KLM went to Barranquilla the Pan American Airways opened a service across the Caribbean from Maracaibo via Haiti to Miami. As a result the main junction for the flights to and from the United States was no longer through Barranquilla but had shifted to Maracaibo, which had already been included in KLM's system since July 1936. Thus we confined ourselves to only one flight weekly to Barranquilla.

At that time KLM was anxious to attempt another project, one of the very few that never did materialize. The plan was to fly from Maracaibo some 200 miles southwestwards to a city called Cucuta, just over the Venezuelan border

in Colombia, at the northern end of the Cordillera Oriental mountain range. This was a city of growing importance which up to this time had very little communication facilities. Moreover, in Cucuta the KLM plane could connect with a SCADTA line to Bogota and in this way the capital of Colombia would be only a day's travel from Curacao. However, KLM's application was turned down by the Venezuelan Government, on the ground that they considered it undesirable to allow any foreign aircraft crossing a territory concerning which there had been a border dispute for many years. So the service, which had optimistically been marked with a dotted line on our colorful route maps, never became a reality and disappeared from the later editions.

In June and July the last two Lockheeds, KOLIBRIE and MEEUW, were flown from Miami to Curacao in a non-stop flight by Rupplin and Viccellio. Viccellio brought the repaired PARKIET back in August and in September de la Porte finally flew the TROEPIAAL back to Curacao, after this plane also had received its coat of anti-corrosive paint at the Lockheed factory.

### In one day to New York

With the new timetable of September 5, 1938 a most useful through-connection was introduced. The departure of the Maracaibo plane, usually in the afternoon, was shifted to early morning on Monday. It left Hato at 6:00 A.M., arrived at Maracaibo at 7:50, early enough to enable passengers and mail to be transferred to the PAA Clipper which left Maracaibo at 8:50 from the water-base. The Clipper arrived at Miami the same afternoon at 5:00. Proceeding from Miami northward with Eastern Airlines you would land at La Guardia Field in New York at 5:00 A.M., only 23 hours after leaving Curacao.



*Boys in uniform, May 1938: l. to r.: Capt. Gey-sendorffer, pilot Andre de la Porte, engr. Hartog, engr. Prins, pilot Rupplin, radio-op. Van der Kolk, the late flight-mechanic De Bruyn, pilot Viccellio, station-mgr. Polvliet, radio-op. Van Haaren, engr. Slimmers, engr. Van't Riet*



*Our fleet on Hato, May 1938: SNIP, PARKIET, TROEPIAAL and ORIOL*

## New expanded schedules

In December 1938 a revised schedule came into force. Most routes showed an increased demand for space. The Maracaibo service was finally stepped-up into a daily schedule. Once a week the Maracaibo plane proceeded to Barranquilla. The local Curacao-Aruba service was increased to twice daily; La Guaira continued three times weekly. A new arrangement was put into effect that appealed very much to passengers traveling from La Guaira via Curacao to Maracaibo. The travel ticket of those passengers included a voucher which entitled them to have a decent meal in the airport restaurant in Curacao during the 40-minutes waiting time between the arrival of the plane from La Guaira and its departure for Aruba and Maracaibo. This proved to be a handy solution for the rather difficult problem of serving meals on board the Lockheeds, which have no pantry and only a very limited space for storage of drinks and food. It was soon learned that the passengers enjoyed very much the privilege of having their luncheon at a well-set table with a clean white cloth.

With the same timetable for the first time a regular service to Bonaire, was introduced one round-trip each week. This was our shortest line. 50 miles only. The results were very satisfactory and beyond the most optimistic expectations.

## Publicity

In the summer of 1938 we started with the publishing of a regular monthly pamphlet which was called the News Reel for the Caribbean. The fact that the number of copies had to be increased with practically each new issue proved that this publication attracted the interest of many people. At the beginning of the war in 1940 it was thought better to stop this publication.

About the same time a nicely illustrated folder was issued, of which several thousands were distributed at the New York World's Fair. The attention of the traveling public was focused particularly on Curacao itself, and of course on its easy accessibility by various air lines.

Our representative in Caracas devised a brilliant publicity feature. KLM's internationally admired "Flying Dutchman" poster was painted in a tremendously enlarged version and in most impressive colors on the safety screen of Caracas' largest movie theatre. Judging from comments we believe it was one of the most efficient advertisements KLM ever displayed in the West Indies.

In the meantime the improvement of Piarco airfield in Trinidad, and the construction of the Seawell airport in Barbados proceeded steadily. While the work on Piarco was in progress the old landing strip remained in use. The drainage system was dug up, renewed and enlarged. As the direction of the original runway did not coincide exactly with the prevailing winds, the construction of a second runway was taken in hand, so that that field would have the form of an "X." At KLM's request the Trinidad Government built a temporary



*Inspection of our new acquisitions by the public, Hato, May 1938*



*Lockheed TROEPIAAL in front of airstation at Barranquilla airport*



*KLM's new buses, May 1938*

station in proportion to the budget available, a nice little building containing rooms for the immigration and customs officers, a dispatcher's office, wash and storerooms and a pleasant terrace in front for the waiting passengers. It was all erected in a very short time and, with some well arranged gardening around, it was a handsome and attractive spot.

### Important photographic work

In February 1958 the twin-engined Fokker DUIF flew from Curacao to Trinidad to start its aerial mapping operations under personal supervision of Mr. J. M. Corsten, head of KLM's photographic department, assisted by his longtime co-worker Mr. Van Winden. Viccellio was the pilot and to the crew belonged also a photographer-radio-operator Mr. C. van Oyen. Unfavorable weather conditions prevented the final completion in that season. Therefore, the DUIF returned to Curacao in July and was used then for an important order of aerial survey work on behalf of the Curacao Government.

### Visits to Surinam, Barbados and Trinidad

For various purposes, in the first place in view of the plans for a permanent airport in Surinam and in connection with a few projects for photographic survey in that country, KLM wanted to pay a visit to Paramaribo with one of the Lockheeds. So, in August 1958, with the brand new MEEUW, which shortly before had arrived from the U. S., Pilot Ruppelin and his crew, Bouman, Corsten and a few guests flew direct to Paramaribo in barely seven hours. At the request of His Excellency, Governor J. Kielstra, some very interesting flights were made over the interior of the territory, over country of which large regions had never been visited by white men and where in many parts there had never been human habitation at all.

Corsten returned to Holland in October to complete in his laboratory the photographic material he took back from the West Indies.

In the beginning of October 1958 it was reported that the airfield at Barbados had been so far completed that a trial flight would be justified. Though at Piarco the work was still in progress, this airport too was in serviceable condition, particularly in dry weather.

The flight from Curacao to Trinidad was uneventful, as that trip had already been made a few times with the survey plane. But at Piarco field we wished to publicize KLM; a number of government officials and some influential business people had been invited for the occasion. After all, since KLM was the first company to operate land planes to Trinidad, this occasion could undoubtedly be considered a milestone in the development of Trinidad's aviation.

For Barbados the landing of the Lockheed KOLIBRIE, with Pilot de la Porte in command, was even of greater historical significance. It was the first

*An exploration flight to Surinam, August 28, 1958; arrival on Zandery field; l. to r.: Dr. De Niet, Att'y Gen'l in Paramaribo; Mr. J. Nederhorst, Mrs. Bouman, Bouman, Ruppelin, Capt. Van der Mey, the Governor's Aide; photographer Corsten, Van der Kolk*



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*At 15,000 feet, between Aruba and Barranquilla*





*Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta*

plane ever to land at Barbados, and the greater part of the population had never seen an airplane from a short distance. On that day the schools closed, practically everyone had or at least took a day off, many high government officials and everybody else worth knowing was present at Seawell airport. The first airmail ever to reach Barbados was accepted by the Postmaster with appropriate ceremony.

It is not possible to name all the people who assisted with our plans and gave their support to the airport project in Barbados. However, we cannot fail to mention first Sir Mark Young, Governor of the Island, who, from the very beginning of the discussions, had shown a keen interest in KLM's plans. In charge of the airport project was the late Major S. Peck, Director of Public Works, who, in our opinion, achieved miracles, taking into account the very limited budget with which he had to work.

Already in 1935 KLM had approached the well-known house of S. P. Musson Son & Co., Ltd. to become its agents for Barbados. We never have regretted their acceptance. The heads of this important firm, Messrs. Dudley and Norman Leacock, not only assisted us on all occasions, but it was mainly their personal influence that had brought to the people of Barbados the conviction that their participation in the aviation system of the West Indies was an economic necessity. KLM also owes much to Mr. Percy Taylor, formerly head of the shipping department of Messrs. Musson & Son, whose congenial cooperation has been extremely useful. Mr. Taylor a short time ago entered the service of British West Indies Airways.

Barbados is a very pleasant island, with a mild subtropical climate; the KLM people who, especially on this occasion, had the opportunity to stay a little longer on this delightful spot in the Atlantic, still have very happy mem-

ories of that visit.

It was deemed necessary to have some one on this island familiar with flying operations, to deal with communications, weather reports, etc. For this purpose a young sports flier, Mr. Charles Baeza, was engaged and he remained with us until KLM unfortunately had to suspend its operations to Barbados in 1940.

We want to recall too the excellent cooperation received from the British Telegraph and Cable Company. In that experimental stage of this line KLM preferred not to spend or invest much capital in either permanent or semi-permanent installations and that company appeared ready to take care of the radio communication for the planes. Their equipment at the time was far from modern and hardly adequate for the purpose, but what was lacking materially was largely compensated for by the devotion of the small B. T. C. radio staff.

Though we had the impression that both on Trinidad and Barbados the runways would be sufficiently solid below the turf, in the rainy season some disappointments in this respect were experienced. This was the main reason KLM could not start the planned operations sooner after the test flight. The regular service, including Trinidad and Barbados, did not become effective until February 6, 1939.

In the meantime Hato airport, at Curacao, underwent several alterations and improvements, for which the Government had allowed a sum of \$35,000. A second runway, pointing east-northeast—west-southwest, was constructed and the original east-west runway was provided with a new firm foundation. After that both runways received a beautiful smooth surfacing of asphalt concrete. Though, according to modern standards, they were still rather short, after the completion of this work Hato could be considered a good field.

*Lockheeds on the line, June 1938*



## KLM moves into a new head-office

The activities of the West Indies Management increased in proportion to the extended operations. Up to September 1938, for almost four years the KLM head office staff had enjoyed the hospitality of Messrs. Maduro in their own office. After that time, however, the headquarters were moved to a new and modern office building at 3, de Ruyterkade, directly around the corner from the offices of Messrs. Maduro. As so often happens in such circumstances when moving into new quarters, they appear very roomy, almost extravagant, and one has the impression that it will be a century before they will be outgrown. But, already by 1940 we felt ourselves cramped. Fortunately, when the design for the office was made, KLM had acquired an option for additional floor space in the same building.

In October 1938 Koot returned to Holland for his vacation; he was replaced by Mr. Hoffman van Hove, who held the position of assistant manager until May 1940. We were able to engage another young man at the time as traffic manager, Mr. F. R. H. Beaujon, who, with Messrs. Maduro, had been in charge of activities concerning dispatch and reservations for KLM since 1935. He was not only a hard and intelligent worker, but also an excellent adviser to us in the most diversified matters. We have seldom met a person so well acquainted with all the complicated immigration and customs formalities in the Caribbean. Beaujon would undoubtedly have had a brilliant future with the company, but fate decided differently. In March 1939 he was ordered on a business trip through Colombia, to explore the possibilities and promote interest in KLM in that progressive Republic. On this trip he died, when the plane in which he was traveling crashed in the interior of the country. His passing away was an irre-

*Upon the arrival on Barbados, l. to r.: Bouman, Garschagen, Major Peck, Director Public Works; Van der Kolk, Van der Ham, and de la Porte*



placeable loss to our company.

Garschagen, who had previously been station master in Aruba, was assigned to organize the new branch in Trinidad, which station, next to Curacao, would in the near future become KLM's most important junction in the West Indies.

In view of the expected expansion in the beginning of 1939, more flight crews and ground mechanics were sent over from Holland in the course of 1938; among them were pilots N. Bos and H. Hakkenberg van Gaasbeek, flight engineers Van der Ham and Veenendaal, and engine expert A. Schuttevaer. Most of these men are still in the West Indies and in their respective jobs they have greatly contributed to the efficiency of operations.

On December 31, 1938 there were in all five pilots, ten flight engineers and four radio operators. The total number of employees in the West Indies had risen to 60, of which 25 originated from KLM Holland.

## Results in 1938

The increase of the frequency of the older lines and the addition of the new ones resulted in much higher traffic figures in 1938. The route mileage increased from 457 to 794 miles; the number of miles flown more than doubled from 142,970 to 288,560; the number of passengers went up from 5,895 to 9,822; the number of passenger miles rose from 826,000 to 1,524,000. The quantity of freight and excess baggage, as well as the airmail, more than doubled to respectively 183,530 and 15,059 pounds. Among the many kinds of merchandise carried there was a new item: baby chicks. These one-day old creatures were flown by PAA from Miami to Maracaibo by the thousands; in Maracaibo we picked them up for delivery in Curacao and Aruba.

*Flowers for the Captain, October 19, 1938*



*October 19, 1938, Van der Ham carries first airmail ever to arrive in Barbados*



# 1939

The beginning of the year 1939 saw KLM ready to undertake the greatest expansion of its services in the West Indies so far.

In April the flying qualities of the Lockheeds were markedly improved by the installation of fixed wing-slots. Assisted by two technicians from the Lockheed factory, the work was completed on each plane in its turn by the technical department. It was an intricate operation, which however was very ably performed in a comparatively short time.

## Preparations on Barbados

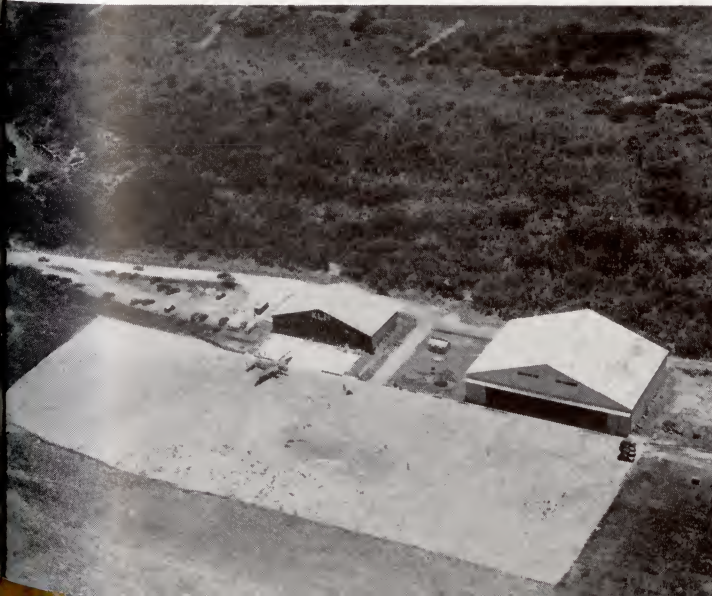
The nearer the inauguration of the Barbados-Trinidad service came the more optimistic KLM grew about the outcome. The number of steamer connections between the islands was rather limited and, as there were always a large number of through-going passengers on board those vessels, very little accommodation could be offered for local passage. Moreover, everyone who had made that trip could give testimony of the unruly waves, stepped up by the strong trade winds, so that for many travelers the trip by boat was not exactly a pleasure.

The Barbados Government had made available the money necessary for the construction of a simple temporary station building, a little larger but along the lines of our own building at Aruba. The design and the procurement of material seemed to take longer than anticipated, but as it was the intention to

open the service in the driest part of the dry season, we figured we could manage without a building during the initial stages. Just a few days before one of the Lockheeds was going to make the first flight an alarming message was received from the agents in Barbados: the customs and immigration authorities demanded proper accommodation; if this was not provided they would not allow the service to open. Bouman flew over to Barbados and that same night conferred with the Government authorities and with a couple of contractors. A plan for a temporary structure was drawn and KLM agreed to pay cash for it. Even a canopy to enable the passengers to embark under cover, and an enclosure for visitors, were included in the plan. They went to work early the next morning; trucks hauled men, material and tools to the airport. That same evening the framework stood up; the following morning the corrugated iron roof covering was fixed, a few hours later the walls were erected and a customs-bench, ticket counter and closets, were installed. As regards plumbing, this was a very simple matter; there was no water supply and no outlet as yet. To telephone one had to walk to a farm house at the other side of the field. But the Government's requirements were met for the time being. The paint was still wet at eight o'clock that evening, but it was felt appropriate to give a housewarming party for a few close friends on the island. It was a gay party that lasted until everything, including the paint, was dry.

Imagine the surprise of all the people who came out to Seawell next morning when the plane was due, and they unexpectedly saw the station building. Frankly that name was a little elaborate for the modest shed, but how proud we were to see the Union Jack and the KLM house flag fluttering high over the tin roof against the blue tropical sky.

*Hato airport, before construction of new runways had started, early 1938*



*New runways at Hato in construction, May 1938*





*Barbados' beautiful beaches*

## Trinidad schedules

As stated before, much more local traffic was anticipated between Barbados and Trinidad than between those islands and the other stations in the West Indies. From traffic statistics we knew that at that time not many passengers between Curacao and Trinidad could be expected. Therefore, the schedules, effective as of February 6, 1939, were planned in a way to require only one plane and one flight crew.

On Monday after the arrival of the local plane from Aruba, the Lockheed would leave Curacao and go direct to Trinidad; after half an hour it proceeded to Barbados, an hour and a quarter flight, to return the same afternoon to Trinidad. On Wednesday the plane made another round-trip from Trinidad to Barbados; on Saturday morning the same, but after coming back to Trinidad returned to Curacao via La Guaira to pick up passengers for Curacao from that place. The landing in La Guaira had another purpose. Pan American Airways had no service along the north coast from Trinidad on Saturdays, so KLM provided an opportunity for people who wanted to fly from Trinidad to La Guaira that day. These Saturday and Monday services created a useful weekend connection between Trinidad and Barbados, which gradually became very popular, especially with the many smartly uniformed teen-age boys and girls from Trinidad who were going to college in Barbados.

*First KLM plane hovers over Barbados airfield, October 19, 1938*

With the growing importance of Piarco as a junction of KLM lines, which would again increase with the opening of the extension of the line as far as Paramaribo, contemplated for the fall, it became necessary to take various measures.

In the offices of the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company, where the Manager, Mr. Salazar, his assistant Mr. Martin Kieft and the personnel so wholeheartedly assisted in the establishment of our organization over there, KLM took a separate section, and in May Koot was appointed as KLM representative in Trinidad; Mr. Kimmerer, who had arrived from Holland in 1938 and since had been employed at various stations in the West Indies, became his assistant. Kimmerer's successor as Manager of the Aruba station was Mr. A. Polvliet, who previously had been an assistant at Hato. A special ticket counter was arranged, KLM got its own telephone line and established a motor car service between the prominent hotels, the ticket office and the airport. Our first driver, Williams, engaged early in 1939, is still in KLM's service in Trinidad. He is one of those faithful employees who never uses the excuse of a flat tire for being late.





There is a place in Port of Spain where the KLM car stopped to pick up passengers and crew members, when they had to stay overnight. It would be an omission to fail to recall here the Bagshot Hotel near the Savannah. This was one of the most pleasant hotels in the West Indies, airy rooms, each with a modern, colorful bathroom, spotless linen, efficient friendly service, a well stocked bar, exposed terraces, lovely gardens all around and excellent management. It was soon chosen as the regular stopping place for crew members and many passengers, who often preferred this quiet spot to the well-known and busy Queens Park Hotel. It was regretted by many that in 1940, as a result of the war, the hotel was converted into a sort of hospital. KLM people certainly have most agreeable recollections of their stay in the Bagshot.

At the time of the start of operations around Trinidad the PAA Manager in charge there was Mr. Elmo Bearden, who helped us in many ways and was always glad to cooperate wherever possible. Bearden left the PAA organization a couple of years ago. In the beginning KLM endeavored to come to an agreement with PAA to provide us with the necessary radio service. However, with their own operations growing as well as our increasing demands, the capacity of their radio organization soon became insufficient to handle the heavy traffic. Moreover their station was near the seaplane base, too far away from the airfield to promptly provide the pilots with urgent information and directions often needed in Trinidad, when huge formations of clouds rolled over the mountains and tropical rains began to pour down, decreasing visibility to a few hundred yards.

It was decided, therefore, to install our own temporary radio station at Piarco,

which established contact with Curacao on July 7th. KLM's first radio operator there, carefully instructed by Van Haaren, was a British Indian, Singh. Singh was one of the most versatile workers we ever engaged. He was a capable radio man, and one could always find him wherever he could be of any assistance whatsoever.

To enable Slimmers, the engineer in charge, and his men to work at the planes, sheltered from sun and rain, a nose hangar was erected on the field, in the back frame of which was ample storage space for parts and tools. This structure was placed close to the station building, in the intersection of the old and new runways, and therefore it was thought it would never be in the way of the departing planes. In 1940 PAA decided to move to Piarco and practically abandoned their seaplane base at Cocorite. The Government started the construction of a well designed permanent station building, large hangars and many other facilities. Moreover a new extended runway system was devised which obliged KLM to take down its nose hangar. However, during 1939-1940 it had been very useful.

### Extending to Paramaribo

Gradually the preparations for the extension of the Trinidad service to Paramaribo were proceeding. On the Zandery airfield the drainage system was improved and soft spots and holes were filled in, so that even in wet weather the field would be sufficiently reliable. A nice little station building was constructed by the Department of Public Works. The main problem that remained was the transportation from town to the airport. For the first 20 miles there was

September 1938, in the head-office, r. to l.: the late F. Beaujon, accountant Lablans, head of administration Zonruiter, traffic-ass't Hoffman, ass't-Mgr. Koot



Illumination of office building during celebration of The Queen's Jubilee, September 1938



On apron of Hato are five of KLM's seven planes. At far right the survey plane PJ-AED DUIF





*Curacao harbor entrance, Waterfort*

a narrow and rather dusty road. With due caution this stretch to a station called Onverwacht could be made in a little over a half hour, provided there were not too many ox-carts on their way to market. From Onverwacht it was necessary to change from an automobile to an ingenious contraption called the "draisine," a kind of trolley that could accommodate eight passengers. It was driven by a Ford engine and vaguely resembled a station wagon. At any rate, this means of transportation was a great improvement over the slow train. The run from Onverwacht to the Zandery field by train took more than an hour; by "draisine" hardly half an hour, a trip in itself interesting, as it passed a lush tropical jungle that suddenly cleared near the wide sunny Zandery savannah.

In view of the expected importance of Paramaribo as a future transatlantic air station, in May 1939 KLM put in charge there as its representative Mr. B. G. van Os van Delden, who certainly deserves praise for the manner in which

he handled the array of difficult problems faced in those early days. In 1940 Van Delden was transferred to Trinidad to succeed Koot, but later in the same year he was called up for military service. He is now serving his country overseas, after acting for some time as military aide to the Governor of Surinam.

## Airport plans in Surinam

Mention has already been made of the fact that the Netherlands Government fully realized the importance of the construction of a modern transatlantic airport in Paramaribo. To a certain extent we found there the same controversy with which KLM had been faced a year or two before in Trinidad. Some believed that Zandery was much too far from town, which would involve loss of money and loss of time traveling to and from the field, for the passengers as well as for the crew members. They recommended the construction of a new airfield on a former plantation called Zorg-en-Hoop only two miles from the city. Other people claimed that never near the town would one find a natural plain with so many possibilities for future extensions and such good soil condition. Of course, keeping Zandery would demand the construction of an adequate motor road from the City to the airport. However, this road would serve many other purposes. Further, they contended that only very few of the passengers eventually arriving from the other side of the ocean would actually want to stay in Paramaribo, but would be anxious to proceed as soon as possible to their final destinations.

Discussions about the desirability of this or that project were still going on when, by drilling in several places, it was discovered that, contrary to previous investigations, the sub-soil near Paramaribo appeared to contain a large amount of quicksand which would make the construction of good solid runways practically impossible. Samples of this substance were sent to the Government Soil Research Laboratories in Holland, and as a result the decision was made to stick to Zandery as the site for a permanent airport. The Netherlands Government would provide a loan of \$800,000 for the initial expense. The plans included one-mile long runways, hangar, station building, garage, radio station, guest house, and a complete night-landing installation. It was contemplated to start with the actual construction of the runways and with the new road in the spring of 1940. At that time war broke out in Europe and what happened to Zandery is covered in one of the following pages.

On September 4, 1939 the regular service to Paramaribo was opened with very little ceremony. On the previous day German troops had marched into Poland, which treacherous act set Europe aflame. Anxious days followed. Would Holland be spared this time as she was in 1914? Of course we felt worried, but this was no reason to discontinue the program.

The schedules started at that time may have seemed a little strange to aviation people. For economical and technical reasons it was desirable to fly the whole Curacao-Trinidad-Barbados and Paramaribo schedule with one crew. On Monday morning the plane flew from Curacao to Trinidad, but instead of going on to Paramaribo it made the regular round-trip to Barbados; the following morning, Tuesday, it went to Paramaribo, where it arrived about noon. The distance from Trinidad to Paramaribo is roughly 550 miles, about three hours flying time from Trinidad. The ship would stay about an hour in Paramaribo, to disembark passengers and cargo, refuel, board the people and goods for Trinidad and Curacao and fly back to Trinidad. On Wednesday morning the plane made a round-trip to Barbados and in the afternoon went back to Curacao. On Thursday morning it again left Curacao for Trinidad, followed by a round-trip to Barbados. On Friday it did not fly, but there was something in view for that day. On Saturday the plane again made a round-trip to Barbados and returned to Curacao via La Guaira. Therefore, the schedule resulted in four round-trips Trinidad-Barbados, two round-trips Curacao-Trinidad and one round-trip Trinidad-Paramaribo each week, the latter with through connections to and from Curacao and Aruba.

Of course the comment will be that people who traveled from Curacao to Paramaribo or reverse, arrived about noon in Trinidad and had to wait a full afternoon and a night before they could proceed to their destination. What we noticed was that 99% of the passengers liked this arrangement very much. Most of them had for some time been more or less isolated in Curacao or Paramaribo; nothing gave them more pleasure than to have a quiet morning or afternoon to

look around in Port of Spain, sip their planter's punch or rum cocktail on Queens Park's wide terrace, do some shopping, if so inclined, spend a gay evening in the hospitable country club and finally, early or late, go to bed in a cool room in a modern hotel like the Queens Park or the Bagshot, to be picked up the next morning by KLM's car, waiting at their hotel door.

Another advantage for KLM with this schedule was that for the incoming and outgoing plane in Paramaribo we had to order only one round-trip of the "draisine," which arrangement saved quite some money. One of the attractions with the arrival in Paramaribo at noon was always the enormous platter with fresh rolls and sandwiches, coffee, and "ice cold" Coco-Cola that was kept ready under the supervision of a voluminous Negro maid.

### Connecting with steamers

In the first half of 1939 the opportunity of close cooperation with two newly opened steamship services presented itself. These were the Grace Line from New York to Curacao and the American Republics Line from New York via Barbados to South America and back from South America to the U. S. via Trinidad. It is obvious that, as the American Republics Line could offer no passage from New York to Trinidad but only to Barbados and on the way back only from Trinidad to New York and not from Barbados, KLM had a fine opportunity to supplement the steamer service. To connect with the southbound steamers at Barbados and with the northbound ships at Trinidad, an extra round-trip Trinidad-Barbados was added, until this automatically was included

*Little station in Barbados, erected overnight,  
February 1939*



*In front of station building on Barbados airport*



*Native interest in the wonders of flying*



*Governor's palace in Trinidad*



after the opening of the Paramaribo service. Together with the American Republics Line KLM published an attractive folder, drawing attention to the new connecting service. Until the war caused the suspension of the steamer service, KLM enjoyed the most cordial cooperation with the American Republics Line. Both parties experienced the advantage of largely increased traffic by this supplementary schedule.

Another important agreement that resulted in mutual benefit to both companies was the connection KLM provided with the fast service between Curacao and New York of the Grace Line. The luxurious steamers of that company brought to Curacao quite a number of travelers, whose ultimate destination was Aruba or Maracaibo. An arrangement was made so that, with the cooperation of customs and immigration authorities, the passengers from the Grace Line ships for the other destinations were picked up at the dock by the KLM bus and immediately transported to the airport; often in less than an hour after the arrival of the boat they were already in the air. Generally those people had enormous loads of baggage, huge trunks, cases and crates, sometimes weighing a couple of hundred pounds each. The old Fokkers, with their high square cabins, their

wide doors and large baggage space, were particularly useful for transporting these bulky pieces. Stripped of the cabin chairs they could easily take up to two tons of baggage.

During 1939 several improvements were carried out on Hato airport. In March a most useful project was finally completed—the electric power connection from town to the airport. We can hardly understand now how we managed to run the business at the airport for so many years without any power supply from the outside. During the first year, when the technical crews had to work after sunset, they used to rig up some powerful kerosene lamps. Later some better light was provided by connecting electric flood lights with a small gasoline generator on the field. Up to 1939 there were no electric machine tools, but from then on we could instal lathes, drilling machines, air compressors and all kinds of special equipment so badly needed for the maintenance of the planes. The whole project was a costly affair, of which KLM had to pay a substantial share.

In the fall of 1939 another project that had been eagerly awaited was finished—the construction of three nice houses just beneath the cliff overlooking the Hato airfield. The location of these well planned quarters saved much time for

*KOLIBRIE in front of station building at Piarco airfield*

*Mr. J. F. Salazar, KLM agent in Port of Spain, and Bouman, have a toast on the newly opened service. In background a Lockheed of the regular service, and a wing tip of SNIP, which did survey work at the time*



members of the staff who had to be at the airport on short notice in the event of an emergency and very often at inconvenient hours. The buildings were assigned to one of the engineers, one of the pilots and to the station manager.

Since 1935 several improvements on a smaller scale were carried out on the road from town to the airport. Finally, in 1938-1939 a full sized concrete road was completed, much to the delight of the passengers, visitors to the airport and to the KLM employees. It contributed many years to the life of our busses and private cars.

To the motor-car park was added another small bus, so that at the end of 1939 three busses were running between the town and the airport; the old bus which was used in 1935 for that purpose had been converted into a freight truck for the technical department.

In May 1939 we were happy to welcome an important visitor from Holland, Dr. J. Damme, Director General of Posts and Telegraphs, one of the foremost promoters of commercial aviation in the Netherlands. He always had been a strong advocate for the transport of mail through the air; the rapid growth of KLM's Amsterdam-Batavia air service was largely the result of Dr. Damme's foresight and continued interest. In 1939 he attended an international postal congress in Buenos Aires and, via Paramaribo, where KLM offered him further transportation, he flew to Curacao. After various enlightening discussions with authorities and officials in those territories and with the KLM representatives, he returned to Holland via the United States.

## Plans for a line to Ciudad-Bolivar

Not so long ago KLM's attention had been drawn to a well-known town in Venezuela, situated one hundred and fifty miles inland on the south bank of the Orinoco River. Originally this town was called Angostura, a name that still lives on in a brand of famous bitters formerly manufactured in that place. The plant for making the bitters was transferred to Trinidad. A few years later the town was renamed Ciudad Bolivar, in honor of the Liberator of Venezuela. For a long time this city had been of little significance, but owing to the establishment of mining operations in that region its economic importance was growing rapidly. The town was already provided with a regular domestic air service by the enterprising Linea Aeropostal Venezolana, but it had no direct air connection abroad. It was thought that a service to Trinidad might be of advantage, and this time there was very little trouble in obtaining the approval of the Venezuelan Government for this plan. However, the permit from the British Government (remember that Great Britain was then already at war) took much longer to obtain. Some trial flights were made. Ciudad Bolivar had a good airfield as well as one of the finest administration buildings of all the countries around the Caribbean. Actually the scheduled service opened on January 5, 1940. Of course the Trinidad staff had a lot of work in connection with the preparations for this service. Koot spent several weeks in Ciudad Bolivar; he particularly disliked traveling up the mosquito infested, hot Orinoco Delta on a river boat, which, on an open deck below the passenger quarters, carried a hundred or two mooing cows.

*Nose hangar on Piarco*



*The train ride from Zandery field to town took over two hours*



*But it was shortened a great deal after the "draisine" was invented*



*P.A.A. Clipper on the Surinam River*





*Flaps down, gliding in over Piarco*

## Douglas DC-5s for Curacao

In the meantime a very important decision had been taken by the KLM Management in Holland. Almost a year before KLM had ordered four Douglas DC-5 aircraft, a new type twin-engine, high wing plane. This plane had several features, among them a nose wheel, which made it particularly suitable for use on landing fields of limited size. They were available with two different cabin arrangements; one could take 22 passengers; in the other type the forward compartment was divided and part of it was fitted as a baggage hold instead, so it took only 18 passengers. The passenger cabin was roomy and excellently ventilated. The fuselage was very low to the ground, which facilitated the embarking and disembarking of the passengers and made loading and unloading of the spacious baggage compartments easy. Three of the batch of four

ordered for KLM had the 22 passenger arrangement; by way of experiment the fourth plane was of the 18-passenger type.

Because of the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1939 many international airlines on that continent were curtailed, whereas in the West Indies these planes could be expected to be useful in the future; so the KLM Management decided to direct the first two DC-5s to the West Indies. This decision had many consequences. We would need more hangar space, a lot more workshop equipment, tools and spare parts, because the DC-5s had stronger engines than the Lockheeds; they were fitted with constant speed, full feathering propellers and many other apparatus, for the maintenance of which we were as yet not adequately equipped.

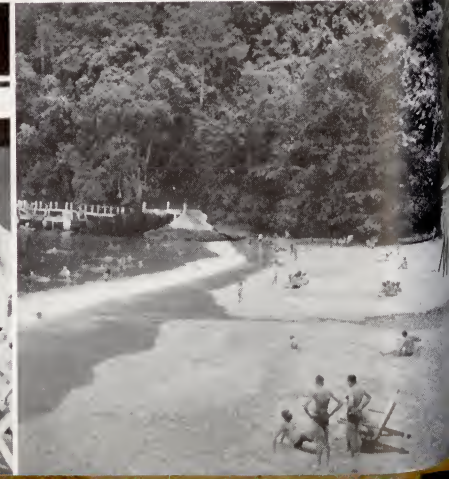
## Hato to be a complete overhaul base

We mentioned before our calculations concerning the time when it would be advantageous to have the engine overhauling done at the Curacao base instead of sending the engines all the way to Holland for that purpose. As a result of the war this could no longer be done anyway and so, for some time, the engines were sent to California for general overhaul. This, however, was not entirely satisfactory and hence elaborate and detailed plans were made by the engineering department of KLM in Holland for a complete engine and propeller shop and plane repair base. These plans were carefully investigated locally and discussed with the Public Works Department in Curacao. As a matter of fact it was agreed that the Government of Curacao would eventually bear the expense for the hangar itself, whereas KLM would pay for the workshops and all other construction that could not be considered a public utility. Finally the contract for the whole project was placed with the N. V. Plettery Nederhorst in Curacao, who also had a large share in the design. Our company has the greatest praise

*September 4, 1939. Governor Wouters listens to a speech of the invisible West Indies Manager on the occasion of the opening of the Paramaribo line*



*Macqueripe Beach Club in Trinidad*



for the pleasant and efficient cooperation received from these contractors, which was so essential because of the interlocking of the public and private works. The actual construction started in the spring of 1940.

It is obvious that, because of growing operations in 1959, several more people had to be engaged. Another pilot arrived from Holland, Mr. H. Groeneveld, who is still serving in Curacao; also two radio operators, Mr. W. N. Broekhuizen and Mr. W. C. Bosson. The latter is now in military service overseas. The technical staff was reinforced by flight engineer Veenendaal. In view of the establishment of the overhaul base in Curacao a few more experts were sent from Holland, of whom we want to mention foreman-mechanic Klynen, who was put in charge of the plane overhaul department, and an expert sheet-metal worker Levering. To take charge of the growing technical administration department Mr. Brouwer came from Holland. He had been with KLM's technical service since its very early years. It is impossible to mention here the many local workmen who entered our service and who were skillfully trained under the supervision of Mr. Prins.

Besides several others, the traffic department in the head-office was reinforced by Mr. H. Peereboom, who a few years later became assistant traffic manager.

In view of the growing importance of Hato as an airfield in October we engaged Mr. Eric Holmberg, who previously had been with TACA airlines. As Airport Manager Holmberg had much to do with the regularity and the punctuality of the services. That there were so few delays in departure and so few complications, even when several planes arrived and landed at almost the same moment, and scores of passengers and hundreds of pounds of baggage had to be handled in a very short space of time, was certainly in a great part due to Holmberg's efficient management. In 1945 he was called up for military duties, but KLM hopes to see him return to its service.

From Holland arrived Mr. H. Clemens, who was appointed assistant station manager at Hato. After Holmberg left, Clemens succeeded him as Station Manager.

As mentioned before, in order to comply with the Air Regulations every six months our pilots had to go to Cristobal for medical examinations, because of the fact that in Curacao there was no specially trained physician and no laboratory to carry out the elaborate tests that were required for transport pilots. At the end of 1959 this want was provided for. A Government physician, Dr. Van der Sar, was assigned for some months to the Medical Service of the Netherlands Army Air Force, and upon returning to Curacao he brought with him the complete equipment needed for these rigorous examinations. This was a valuable improvement, which saved a lot of inconvenience and money.

*The station building at Zandery*



*Kotta Missie, Sunday dress of Surinam Creole women*

## New photographic orders

We have already mentioned that at the end of 1937 a twin-engined F8 plane, PJ-AID, the DUIF, had been sent to the West Indies for photographic operations and that it returned to Curacao when the work in Trinidad could not be finished as a result of adverse weather conditions. The photographic staff was of the opinion that a plane of the F-18 type with its three engines and consequently much faster climb would be of advantage. Since there was ample equipment for all scheduled services it was decided to transfer the photographic installation from the DUIF to the SNIP. After this had been done the SNIP left for Trinidad on January 16th and returned to Curacao in April, having completed the order. Later in the year this plane was used for similar work in Surinam on behalf of the mining companies in that territory. It left for Paramaribo in the beginning of September and returned to Curacao the end of October.

The most important order in this class of work was an aerial mapping project undertaken at the request of the Venezuelan Government; for this purpose the ORIOL, chosen for the job, left Curacao on November 30th for Tachira. This order was not completed until far into 1940.

In view of the scale of these operations two specialists in this branch, Mr. P. H. Steen and Mr. H. Welschen, were sent out from Holland. The war prevented their return home after completion of the survey work in 1940 and the former was transferred to the head office in town and became an assistant in

the accounting department, while Welschen was trained as a wireless operator and has been in that capacity since.

It was thought advisable to sell the old DUIF; after giving it a thorough overhaul and after some negotiations, with Bakker's assistance, it was sold to the Venezuelan Government, which intended to undertake photographic work on its own behalf. The DUIF was flown over to the main base at Maracay in March, tested there and accepted. We were all very sorry to learn that this plane, which since 1928 had served KLM so faithfully on its European lines, came to an untimely end. Only three weeks later, as a result of running out of gasoline, it crashed in the eastern part of Venezuela, fortunately without injury to the people on board.

Some trouble was experienced in the fall of 1939 when the rainy season started in Barbados and Trinidad. Because of the unexpected softness of the fields it became necessary to cancel several trips. In November the situation grew worse and it was then decided to suspend the Barbados service for a month. Of course this was a great disappointment but it clearly proved that those airports would need many improvements before they could be considered wholly reliable for year round service. Fortunately this unsatisfactory condition was acknowledged by the Trinidad Government, and in October they decided to convert Piarco into a first class airport. For this purpose a sum of \$200,000 was appropriated.

*Director of Netherlands Posts and Telegraphs Dr. Damme, arrives by KLM, May 27, 1939*

*Crew that carried out the large aerial mapping project in Venezuela: Capt. Bos, photographer Steen, the late radio-op. Van Oyen, and flight-engr. De Wolf, November 1939*

*Famous pianist Arthur Rubinstein leaves Hato for Venezuela after a series of concerts in Curacao, December 1939*

*KLM agent in Maracaibo and Mrs. Van der Kaay (right) enjoy luncheon at Hato before leaving for Maracaibo*





## Traffic results in 1939

As might be expected as a result of KLM's vastly extended airnet, which increased from 794 to 2,674 miles, the traffic figures for 1939 showed a notable growth over those in 1938. The number of passengers rose to 14,578; the planes flew 562,400 miles; the number of passenger miles amounted to 2,508,000; the amount of freight increased to 258,185 pounds and the airmail to 25,370.

Notwithstanding this substantial increase we were not entirely satisfied. Some lines showed a good occupancy, but some others, especially the new long routes, attracted fewer passengers than had been expected.

The local Trinidad-Barbados service was a success. This was still further boosted by a well planned publicity campaign and by the inauguration of special vacation and week-end round-trips. For a limited period, when there was a slump in the reservations, a 50% reduction was allowed in fare to the wives of the men traveling between those islands.

By offering a reduced rate we tried to stimulate vacation trips for people from Curacao and Paramaribo. They were encouraged to visit the other Netherlands territory, so different in character. Between Barranquilla and Curacao the traffic was also far from good. The commercial relations between those places seemed to have dropped to a low level. Even after lowering the tariffs substantially the load factor on this line remained unsatisfactory. In December 1939 SCADTA changed its schedules in such a way that a one-day connection could be provided from Curacao via Barranquilla to Bogota, but this failed to cause a noteworthy increase in traffic on the Barranquilla line. However, that did not mean KLM wanted to abandon its interests in Colombia entirely; it felt confident that the future would show an improvement in the revenue on that line, and this it actually did some time later.

In this year of considerable expansion it was obvious that expenses would run rather high; the setting-up of new stations, organizing new lines and the increase of personnel in all branches involved a lot of money. On December 31, 1939 the West Indies section employed 95 people, 60% more than the previous year.

The operational loss was, therefore, comparatively high and was far from being compensated by the relatively small subsidy from the Curacao Government and the mail guarantee from the Surinam Government. Only 75% of the total expenses for the year were covered by revenue. Of those expenses a large part was chargeable to depreciation of the greatly increased equipment. Nevertheless the KLM Management in Holland was fully confident that the coming years would bring better financial returns. We are glad to say that their hopes were realized much earlier than anyone dreamed at that time.

## Our fifth anniversary

Though Europe had been in a state of war since September 3, 1939, it was still in that stage which some called the "phony war," and we Dutch were still hoping that our country in Europe might be spared. December 22, 1939 would mark the fifth anniversary of the landing of the SNIP on Hato and, notwithstanding the unfortunate world conditions, it was felt that some kind of celebration was warranted. The Committee which had been formed in 1934 for the welcoming of the SNIP still existed, except that some time before it had lost its progressive Chairman, our very good friend Mr. S. M. L. Maduro. Its treasury still contained money which they decided to use for the erection of a monument in memory of the SNIP's spectacular flight. Mr. Keegstra, an engineer of the Shell Oil Company, designed a most attractive memorial on which vanes pointed in the direction of the different stations to which KLM was flying, and marked with the air distances from Curacao in kilometers. The head of this central pole was embellished by a bronze disc, commemorating the flight of the SNIP and its crew members, the whole surmounted by the winged emblem of KLM. The task of building this monument was completed in an incredibly short

*At 7,000 feet over the islands in the Caribbean*



time. The Public Works Department under Mr. Groote did a splendid job in a few days, laying, in front of the hangar entrance, a smoothly paved circular area, of which the monument formed the center. The last steam roller had barely been withdrawn when His Excellency Governor Wouters and other Government officials, prominent business men, many interested friends and the entire personnel of KLM with their families arrived. They were seated in a wide circle around the monument. Of the original crew of the SNIP only Stolk was able to attend. He was in private business in Aruba at the time but of course had been invited to come over and join in the celebration.

Several pleasant and laudatory speeches were made. Governor Wouters paid high tribute to Bouman and his men, who in five years had made Curacao into an important airlines center. The Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Kies, had many words of praise and appreciation for all who had collaborated in the plan to offer this memorial to the Government of Curacao and the KLM. Bouman expressed his deep gratitude for the valuable cooperation consistently received from all sides, and thereafter lauded the members of his staff, who had shown so much devotion to their work under oftentimes difficult circumstances. When Stolk finally mounted the platform there seemed no end to the cheering.

Under the direction of Van Haaren an evening party had been arranged for all the employees and their families in the gaily-decorated station-hall. There were movies, music, dancing, speeches and contests, and presents for the men who had been with the Company in Curacao from KLM's beginning in 1934. It was not until the sky in the east began to lighten that the party ended.



*KLM flight crews—December 1939*

*Celebration of 5th Anniversary on December 22, 1939. Mr. Henry Kies requests Governor to unveil the monument*

*The monument with its vanes, pointing in direction of air-routes. In background two of the three recently completed houses for airfield personnel*





Personnel of KLM West Indies section in Curacao for the celebration of the 5th Anniversary, December 1939. Not on the photo are the Trinidad ground staff, who had not yet arrived, and the photo-crew in Venezuela. Left to right:

1st row: A. Polvliet, station manager Aruba; Miss M. Pietersz, stenographer; Miss E. Salas, ass't bookkeeper; Miss M. S. E. van Nierop, secretary; R. H. C. van Haaren, chief radio dep't; Andre de la Porte, pilot; K. Rupplin, chief pilot; B. Prins, chief technical dep't; L. F. Bouman, Gen'l Mgr. West Indies section; H. M. J. Hoffman van Hove, ass't gen'l mgr.; H. M. C. Hakkenberg van Gaasbeek, pilot; A. J. Viccellio, pilot; H. Groeneveld, pilot; Miss A. Bouman, stenographer; Miss J. van Meeteren, secretary; Miss S.

Salas, ass't bookkeeper; E. O. Holmberg, station manager Hato;

2nd row: Ch. A. Baeza, station manager Barbados; M. Faneyter, chauffeur; E. E. Penha, chauffeur; E. E. de Jongh, ass't traffic dep't; J. L. Sprock, ass't bookkeeping dep't; W. E. J. Lablans, ass't bookkeeping dep't; L. C. Zonruiter, chief adm. dep't; H. E. Peereboom, ass't traffic mgr.; A. J. Schuttevaer, flight-engr.; A. J. J. Bak, flight-engr.; H. Van der Ham, flight-engr.; J. H. C. Plesman, flight-engr.; J. J. Spanjaard, radio-operator; T. C. van der Kolk, radio-

operator; N. H. de Bruyn, flight-engr.; E. J. Veenendaal, flight-engr.; W. C. Bosson, radio-operator; W. N. Broekhuizen, radio-operator; E. Korevaer, flight-engr.; B. J. Slimmers, foreman-mechanic; R. D. Anasagasto, passenger-agent; M. Levering, metal-worker; R. C. Brouwer, chief adm. technical dep't; J. W. Klijnen, foreman maintenance dep't; P. J. L. Aengenendt, flight-engr.; I. van't Riet, flight-engr.; J. Cijntje, cleaner; G. Alexander, chauffeur; P. Martha, cleaner; H. Beekman, guardsman;

The TROEPIAAL flying along the Curacao south coast

3rd row: S. Brigita, porter; G. Mensink, electrician; H. Martin, cleaner; E. Henriquez, stockroom ass't; G. Veira, ass't bookkeeper; P. H. Opschoor, foreman stockroom; V. Cijntje, cleaner; W. Tam, apprentice mechanic; M. G. Colino, cleaner; A. Calmero, cleaner; F. Ley, apprentice mechanic; W. E. Wauben, junior clerk; A. Koolman, painter; G. F. Mense, apprentice mechanic;

W. C. Schoonen, apprentice mechanic; H. J. Mense, apprentice mechanic; A. Schouten, stockroom ass't; M. Faulborn, passenger agent; L. H. van Kanten, ass't traffic dep't; H. J. Sprock, junior clerk; E. Kipp, cleaner; E. Martina, apprentice mechanic; S. Cici- lia, cleaner; M. Rodriguez, carpenter; F. van Kol, carpenter; J. Coffie, upholsterer; M. Brigita, porter.



# 1940

## New ports of call in Venezuela

The year 1940 started with the opening of a new line, about which we have already given some details. The Trinidad-Ciudad Bolivar service fitted in nicely with the Trinidad schedules. Friday had been left open for that round-trip. In view of the interesting development of the entire eastern portion of Venezuela and its increasing oil and mineral production, the large number of passengers between La Guaira and the north coast harbor of that region, Barcelona, KLM also kept an eye on that spot. Though a connection between La Guaira and Barcelona would mean "internal traffic," it seemed that the Venezuelan authorities were inclined to grant KLM permission to land in La Guaira as well as in Barcelona on the way from Curacao to Trinidad. KLM was the more interested in this possibility since the load factor between Curacao and Trinidad was still below expectation and it was hoped the available seats would be filled with local passengers.

Pan American also called at Barcelona on its north coast service from Panama, via Barranquilla, Maracaibo, La Guaira, Barcelona to Trinidad. Much to our disappointment the approval of the planned schedule was withdrawn at the last moment; PAA was allowed to carry on, as their permit was based on an old contract.

So one of the two points of call on this trip had to be dropped. It was decided to adhere to Barcelona, as it might hold possibilities of developing into a valuable asset later.

## More space for the technical department

The construction of the third hangar on Hato airport, with its well planned annexes, started early in 1940. The size of the hangar proper was about the same as the second one, completed in 1938, but, with its rear section consisting of workshops and storerooms on the first floor, offices, drafting room and personnel canteen on the second floor and its motor and propeller overhaul shop on the east side, it occupied almost 50% more ground space. Several machine tools, test benches and other kinds of equipment were ordered in the United States. At that time Mr. W. Uriot, one of KLM's veteran engine specialists, arrived

*Douglas DC-5, WAKAGO in the air*



from Holland. He was assigned temporarily to the West Indies section for the purpose of instructing the technical staff in the maintenance of the new Cyclone engines and the constant-speed propellers with which the DC-5s were to be equipped. After Prins' departure Uriot succeeded him as chief-engineer; the war prevented him from going back to Holland.

*Workshops in construction, February 1940*



Originally the DC-5s were expected in March, but, owing to the usual minor problems accompanying the release of a new type of plane, it was the end of May before KLM took them over. Pilot Vicellio was assigned to the Douglas factory to inspect these machines, familiarize himself with all details and eventually fly them over to Curacao. Besides our technical representative in Hollywood, Mr. Besancon, the KLM Management had stationed with Douglas Mr. Hoogveen, who later came to Curacao with the DC-5s to instruct the technical staff. (Both Besancon and Hoogveen are now serving their country in the Netherlands Indies Army Air Force.)

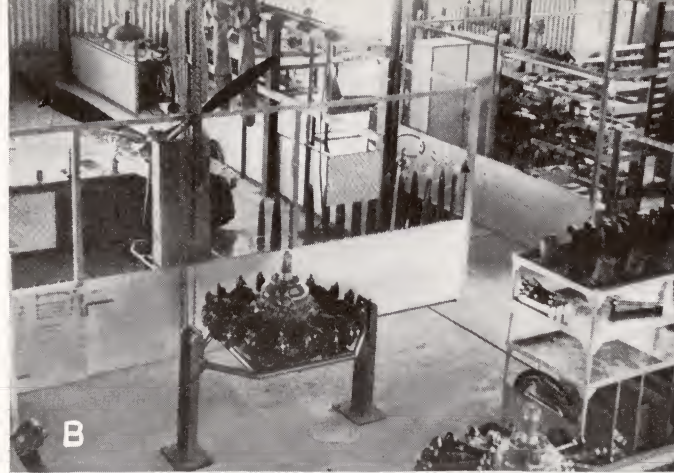
It had been planned to change the schedule a month after the expected arrival of the DC-5s; the frequency of some of the services could be lowered because there would be an average of double the passenger capacity in each plane as compared with that of the Lockheeds. However, matters became a little complicated when in April we had to proceed with the new schedule and the DC-5s were still in California.

### In five days from Curacao to Amsterdam

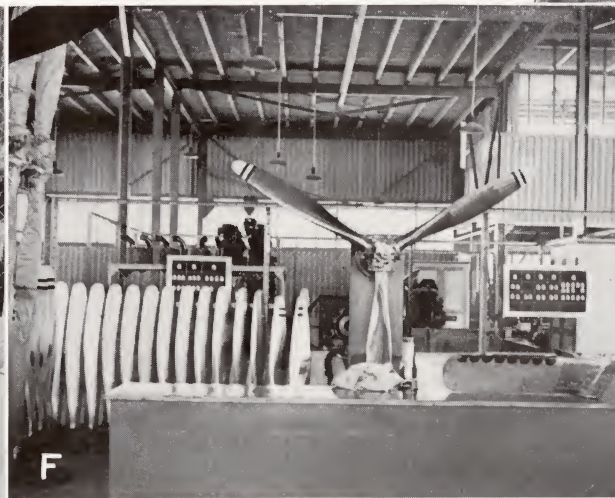
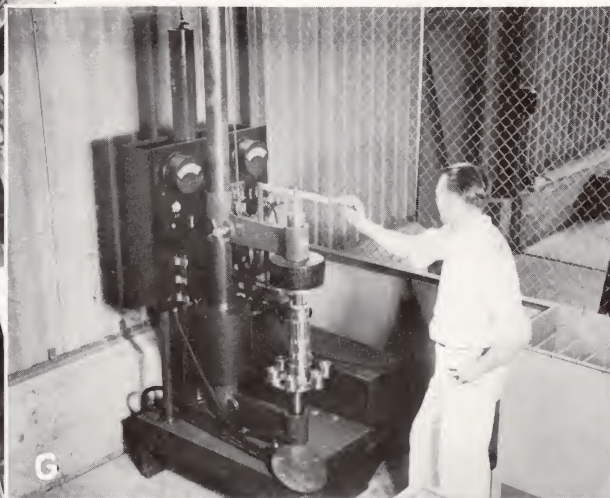
The one-day connection from Curacao via Maracaibo and Miami to New York gained importance after PAA opened its transatlantic service from the U. S. A. to Europe. It will be recalled that a flight left Curacao on Monday morning at six, and connected with the PAA Clipper at Maracaibo, which left for Miami at 8:30. The plane arrived there at 5:00 o'clock the same day. By boarding the Eastern Airlines DC-5 to New York at 9:50 P.M., La Guardia

*In April new hangar is nearing completion; between first two hangars new Shell pumping station; at far left houses for airport staff*





*THE NEW WORKSHOPS IN OPERATION*  
A—Downstairs: workshops; upstairs: offices and canteen. B, C and D—Engine overhaul shop. E—Propeller storage. F—Propeller overhaul shop. G—Magnaflux. H and I—DC-5 Inspection. K—Sheet metal shop. L—Engine test stand.



Airport was reached at 5:00 o'clock the following morning. The next day at noon Pan American left for Lisbon, where it arrived on Thursday at 5:00 P.M. Next morning at 7:00 o'clock a KLM DC-5 was standing ready at Lisbon's airport Cintra to proceed to Amsterdam, a little over a nine hour trip. That was not such a bad proposition, leaving Curacao on Monday and arriving in Amsterdam on Friday. Actually a few passengers made this fast trip and many more would have done so had not western Europe been set aflame by the blitzkrieg a few weeks later.

### Spring schedules

In April 1940 the following services were operated:

- Curacao—Aruba (local) . . . . . twice daily
- “ —Aruba-Maracaibo . . . . . daily
- “ —Aruba-Maracaibo-Barranquilla . . . . . once weekly
- “ —La Guaira . . . . . daily
- “ —Barcelona-Trinidad . . . . . twice weekly
- Trinidad—Barbados . . . . . four times weekly
- “ —Paramaribo . . . . . once weekly
- “ —Ciudad Bolivar . . . . . once weekly
- Curacao—Bonaire . . . . . twice weekly
- “ —Coro . . . . . once weekly

In April the Germans invaded Norway and our already weak hope that the Netherlands might stay out of the war gradually decreased.

During that month KLM received a very important commission from the Trinidad Government to operate a number of special flights in connection with the war. For this purpose Pilot Andre de la Porte, with the TROEPIAAL and a complete crew, was temporarily stationed in Trinidad.

### Preparations for transatlantic flights

Since the beginning of 1940 various departments of KLM in Holland had been busy with preparations for a limited number of trial flights between Amsterdam and Paramaribo, via Lisbon and the Cape Verde Islands. The intention was to closely follow the route explored by Hondong except for the first lap. Two of KLM's DC-5s were going to be fitted with extra gasoline tanks and other special equipment needed for the ocean crossing. The following tentative schedule was planned: first day, Amsterdam—Lisbon—Casablanca; second day, Casablanca—Porto Praia; following night Porto Praia—Paramaribo, altogether 5550 miles. At Paramaribo connection would be made by a plane from the Curacao-Surinam service, so that it would arrive at Curacao at noon on the third day. It was expected that the first flight could be made about September

1940. Then, gradually, the scheme could be expanded from the experimental stage to a regular service, say, twice a month, carrying mail only. Probably within a year, after the delivery of suitable equipment for which orders were being placed, the service could be stepped up to once a week and passengers would be accepted as well as cargo. And thus the feeder-net created in the Caribbean would come into its full usage.

KLM's closely woven system of airlines, linking almost all European capitals and many other important centers of traffic and trade, having been gradually built up and extended since the company's foundation in 1919, would provide the Eastern bridgehead, and thus the airtrail pioneered by the SNIP would be developed into a highway of the air, bringing Northwestern Europe to only two days and a half traveling time from the geographical hub of the whole American continent.

These preparations were only in their first stage when the Germans, on May 10, 1940, launched their attack on the Low Countries, which for KLM resulted in the loss of the greater part of their flying equipment, including twenty Douglas DC-5s and DC-2s, and the complete destruction of their costly ground installations.

The invasion of Holland had an immediate effect on KLM's operations in the West Indies.

Knowing that the Barranquilla airport was still predominantly managed by Germans of the original SCADTA company, after consultation with the Government authorities in Curacao it was thought advisable to suspend the line to Barranquilla for the time being. After receiving assurance that adequate measures had been taken to avoid any interference, to say the least, the service was resumed on a temporary basis in July; the concession of the Colombian Government was definitely renewed on September 5th. Since then that line has been operated without interruption. By that time the operation of SCADTA had been taken over completely by AVIANCA, managed entirely by a combined Colombian and American staff.

### KLM has to suspend Trinidad service

At the end of May some unfortunate events in Trinidad caused the temporary suspension of all KLM services to and from that station.

As KLM did not want to interrupt the air connection from Curacao to Surinam, especially at a time like this, it continued to fly to Paramaribo with Barcelona as the only stopping place. Finally, to our great satisfaction, at the end of November 1940 word was received that KLM was allowed to resume the Trinidad schedule. In the meantime, however, an energetic New Zealander, Mr. Llowell Yerex, founder and president of TACA air lines in Guatemala and

several other countries in Central America, had organized a new company which he called British West Indian Airways. In this company some local capital was invested. He obtained a concession to operate a service between Trinidad and Barbados and, the shipping situation becoming worse and worse, it obviously followed that his service prospered. So a British enterprise had stepped in and when KLM was permitted to resume operations we were limited to transport through-going passengers, but could not carry local traffic between the two islands.

For a short time the line was run under these conditions, but as there were hardly any passengers at all for other destinations we concluded that, much to our regret, we had better leave Barbados. Mr. Yerex' B.W.I.A. thereafter operated an efficient service between Trinidad and Barbados. A short time later he included the small island of Tobago, northeast of Trinidad, in this run and during the following years extended his line along the string of islands on the east side of the Caribbean.

*DC-5 interior*



The Ciudad Bolivar service was not reinstated either. The only increase introduced in KLM's spring schedule was also as a direct result of the war. On Bonaire the Curacao Government established an internment camp for enemy aliens and other undesirable persons, and this fact brought a special category of passengers, policemen, military guards, prisoners, and so forth; so many in fact that it was decided to put in a third and later even a fourth service to Bonaire each week.

In connection with the changing economical and financial situations during 1940, our tariffs and rates had to be readjusted. On some schedules they had to be increased; elsewhere we could afford to decrease them. The outlook for traffic as a whole was much better than in 1939, especially on the Paramaribo line, which gradually gained in popularity, due mostly to the fast expansion of the mining industries in that country.

However, during the second part of the year a decline in the bookings on several of the lines set in. Evidently because of the uncertain political conditions, the residents of the Caribbean Islands and South America more and more limited their traveling to only the most essential.

### The DC-5s are put into service

This tendency was most unwelcome in view of the much larger number of seats that were available on the DC-5s. When they finally arrived in Curacao they gave remarkably little technical trouble; they were easy to fly and the pilots were very soon familiar with them. They were handy planes from the operational point of view and our patrons were enthusiastic about their roomy cabins and their pleasant, comfortable interiors.

In accordance with KLM's custom they had again been given names of West Indies birds, being: PJ-AIW the WAKAGO (Woodgoose) and PJ-AIZ the ZONVOGEL (Sunbird).

The only trouble experienced was the increasing difficulty in getting spare parts, spare engines and the badly needed tools and test equipment. These purchases moreover involved quite a substantial outlay of money, which no longer could be provided by the Management in Holland.

### KNILM is charged with the management of KLM

Shortly after the invasion of Holland the Netherlands Government, temporarily set up in London, because of the fact that none of the former Directors of KLM in The Hague had been able to get away, charged the KNILM in Batavia with the management of all KLM affairs.

KNILM, the Royal Netherlands Indies Airways, which since 1929 oper-



ated an extensive aernet in the Malayan Archipelago, had been managing for KLM the Lydda-Batavia line, the part of the original KLM Amsterdam-Batavia line that could still be operated after Italy joined the fight and attacked France in the back. From June 1940 until September 15, 1945 it was KNILM, in Batavia, who was in the end responsible for the KLM in the West Indies. Times were far from quiet. There was uneasiness everywhere; the KNILM Management, under its Managing Director Major W. C. J. Versteegh, had to cope with many difficulties and worked under great strain. Communication between the West Indies and the Netherlands East Indies was not easy and the KNILM staff often had to make judgments from incomplete data, all in addition to their own greatly increased responsibilities. They assisted KLM to the best of their ability; the West Indies section often greatly benefited by their advice and experience in many matters with which Curacao never had had to deal before, since they had formerly been handled by the KLM Management in Holland. Among other things, in September 1940 the Board of KNILM ordered a reorganization of KLM's office in New York, appointing temporarily Mr. F. C. Aronstein as U. S. representative.

On August 31, 1940, just before he departed for the United States on a business trip, Bouman was informed by the Governor of Curacao that Her Majesty the Queen had bestowed a great honor upon him by appointing him an Officer of the Order of Orange-Nassau, as a recognition of his work in creating air services under the Netherlands Flag in the West Indies. Bouman expressed his personal feeling that every man in his organization was entitled to share in this honor.

To discuss various points concerning the operations and future plans for the West Indies, a little later the Management requested Bouman to fly over to the KNILM head office in Batavia. He left Curacao by plane in November 1940, traveled via New York to Los Angeles, from there by PAA Clipper to New Zealand, from there to Sydney and finally from Sydney by KNILM to Batavia, arriving there on December 15th. He stayed six weeks in Java, during which time various matters concerning the West Indies were considered in detail and several important decisions were reached. The financial position of the West Indies section gave cause for some concern. The operational loss in 1939, as explained, had been substantial; two brand new DC-5s had been added, increasing greatly the amount needed for insurance and depreciation. A substantial amount had to be appropriated for the purchase of the special equipment necessary for the maintenance of the DC-5s. On the other hand, during the last part of 1940 the volume of traffic in the West Indies was not very encouraging. Would KLM be justified in keeping the two big ships in the West, or would it be better to transfer them to the East Indies, where there was an ever increasing demand for space?

*Interior of the enlarged station on Aruba*

*Baby chicks arrive by plane via Miami and Maracaibo*



*Authorities show interest in new Douglas planes. l. to r.: Lt. Van de Laerschoot, Capt. Van den Donker, Naval Commander of Curacao, Governor Wouters, Capt. Venema, Police-Chief, Attorney General Van der Laan, Director of Public Works Grootte*





Major W. C. J. Versteegh, Managing Director KNILM/KLM  
1940-1943

During the three months Bouman was away Steensma, who at that time was KLM's representative in Lisbon, was again in Curacao to take the former's place.

### Various improvements on the airports

In August 1940 the new hangar and workshops at Hato were virtually completed, although the shops still lacked some of the machine tools and other special equipment. At some distance from this hangar an engine test stand was constructed. Gradually the necessary tools arrived, though various special instruments required for the overhaul of the Cyclone engines and the propellers of the DC-5s were not yet there. The entire set-up proved to be a success; full credit for the design of the workshops goes to the engineering department in Amsterdam, to our own engineers in the West Indies, and to the contractors.

The Shell Oil Company built a fine new gasoline pumping station of greatly increased capacity. This was a welcome improvement, as from the two fueling pits and a sturdy gasoline truck the planes could be refueled in much less time. A similar gasoline station, though of somewhat smaller size, was installed at the Aruba airport.

A very useful addition to Hato's station building was a covered, glass-enclosed entrance which enabled the people to go to and from their cars without getting wet, should it be raining, and what was even more appreciated, it largely prevented the wind from blowing clouds of dust into the hall. The kitchen and pantry facilities were considerably enlarged; a great attraction was the new semi-circular bar with its huge refrigerator in the back and its red topped chromium legged stools in front of the counter.

In 1940 some changes were made in the agreements with Maduro in Curacao and Eman in Aruba. In view of a more economical operation KLM entered into a contract with Eman, which stipulated that he would take over all activities in Aruba including the small staff previously on the payroll of KLM. Among them was Polvliet who first fulfilled various duties in the traffic department in Curacao, and later became station manager in Aruba. Though officially Polvliet left KLM on that occasion, we consider him one of the genuine members of the KLM family in the West.

The station building in Aruba again proved to be too small, especially now that the DC-5s brought in their large loads of passengers all at once; so another wing was added to the building. The enlarged bar proved to be the most appreciated addition.

A badly needed installation was completed on Hato, the design of which because of the difficult conditions, undoubtedly required ingenuity. It was an elaborate fire fighting system, including pumping stations, emergency tanks, pipes and hydrants.



*Fokker, Lockheed and  
Douglas*



*Top right  
Before embarking, passengers enjoy lunch at Hato.  
Note new bar in background*

*Middle right  
Both DC-5s on the apron*

*Bottom right  
All aboard for La Guaira*

*Bottom left  
Landing wheels go up*



In Bonaire Mr. L. D. Gerharts was appointed as KLM agent. He was formerly employed by our previous agents, Messrs. Herrera. Gerharts had always been a strong advocate for the establishment of the Curacao-Bonaire airline, and its favorable development is in a large part due to his valuable collaboration. The field in Bonaire still remained unreliable in very wet weather, but funds to provide it with permanent runways were not as yet available.

On the Zandery field there still were no radio facilities at the airport itself; all radio communications were handled by the radio station in Paramaribo. However, at KLM's request a radio beacon transmitter was installed, which proved to be very helpful in navigating the planes in the vicinity of the field under conditions of poor visibility.

On the Trinidad airport, at the end of April, about 2200 feet of the new hard-surfaced runway were completed and the ground-work for the rest of the project was proceeding nicely. About that time the Government started to build a permanent building, which, besides KLM, housed various government bureaus, customs and immigration departments, and offices for the other airlines.

In February 1940 the final flight for the large aerial mapping project in Tachira, Venezuela, took place. In March the ORIOL and its crew returned to Curacao. Shortly thereafter a large part of the Island of Aruba was photographed from the air for the Curacao Government. KLM was negotiating for a very important aerial survey project with the Government of Venezuela when

*The WAKAGO on the picturesque landing field at La Guaira*



the war broke out. Consequently this plan was abandoned. However, another useful task for the ORIOL was found, about which too much cannot be told at present. To be brief, with its crew it was put in military service, at first under command of then Lieutenant Andre de la Porte and, after this pilot had been transferred for even more important military duties, under Sergeant Van der Kolk. On August 24, 1944 an official report of the Netherlands Indies Army Air Force listed Captain Andre de la Porte "missing in action in the South Pacific." We do not give up hope that this excellent young pilot may yet return safely.

In July 1940 our friend Viccellio resigned and his departure was deeply regretted. He had been with KLM since 1935, and he participated and assisted in all stages of the development of our West Indies section, but he felt, as we all did, that troublesome times lay ahead and he could be more useful in the United States. After the temporary, and at the time indefinite closing of KLM's Trinidad station, Koot and his assistant were transferred to Curacao.

In December 1940 the Management in Batavia decided upon several more mutations of personnel in the West Indies. Pilot Rupplin, who had been chief pilot since the departure of Verhoeven in 1938, left that month for Java and his duties were taken over by Pilot Hakkenberg. Rupplin had done a fine job in Curacao and we were more than sorry he had to leave. Koot and Garschagen also were transferred to the East Indies in December. Shortly afterwards Koot was called up, being a reserve officer in the Netherlands Navy. He is now a prisoner of war in Japan. Garschagen remained in Java during the Japanese invasion and he is reported to be in a civilian internment camp on that island. Let us hope that their ordeal is not too severe and that these boys will soon regain their freedom.

Notwithstanding these departures at the end of 1940 we employed in Curacao 105 people; a few more than the previous year.

## Traffic results in 1940

From what has been told before it can be understood that the traffic results over 1940, though the figures were substantially higher than in 1939, were in the end lower than expected at the start of the year. After all, the Barbados-Trinidad run was cancelled after May, as was the Ciudad Bolivar extension.

The traffic between Curacao and Aruba was still growing. Against 6,300 in 1939 KLM carried 8,000 passengers in 1940 between those two islands, compared with only 2,659 in 1935. The Curacao-La Guaira service also showed a gratifying increase, as did Curacao-Bonaire, due to the reasons mentioned before. In the five months of 1940 that we flew between Trinidad and Barbados an average of 200 passengers a month was carried, as against half that number in 1939.

Though measured in absolute numbers the traffic between Curacao and Surinam was still at a low level, it was almost four times as high as in 1939.

On all lines together 17,593 passengers were carried, as against 14,578 in 1939. The planes were 4,118 hours in the air, against 3,408 in 1939; and they flew 661,250 miles as against 562,400 in 1939. The number of passenger miles amounted to 2,656,000; we carried 348,000 pounds of freight and excess baggage and 26,356 pounds of airmail. The route mileage at the end of the year was 2,807.

Though the operating revenue still was substantially lower than the total expenses, the over-all financial picture was better than in 1939, notwithstanding the relatively high funds necessarily allowed for depreciation and insurance and the purchase of new workshop equipment in connection with the arrival of the two DC-5s.

### First landing in Jamaica

In December 1940 an urgent order was received for the execution of the charter flights for the Curacao and Jamaica military authorities in which, besides the militarized ORIOL, one of the Lockheeds participated. During these operations our planes landed for the first time at the recently completed airstrip of the new Jamaica airfield. We will have to wait until after the war before the complete story can be told, but the flying crews did some very good work and their achievements were highly praised by the military commanders concerned.

And so a year that brought some severe disappointments closed with encouraging prospects.



*Flight crews in front of DC-5. Left to right: Bos, Hakkenberg, Wolff Spanjaard, Van der Kolk, Broekhuysen, Bak, Groeneveld, Plesman, Bouman, Holmberg, De Bruyn, Van der Ham, Bennekom, Van Oyen, Korevaer, Van Haaren, Schuttwaer*



*Holmberg guides the TROEPIAAL to station building*



*Rotary members participating in international convention in Curacao, May 1941, welcomed by large crowd upon arrival by air*



1941

Whereas the war in Europe and the uncertainty it caused in the Western Hemisphere, especially in the last quarter of 1940, resulted in a slump in international traffic, this influence in 1941 gradually became counteracted by the decreasing connections by steamers. The Royal Netherlands Steamship Company, for instance, withdrew its popular passenger boat EL LIBERTADOR from the La Guaira-Curacao-Aruba-Maracaibo service, because it had better and more important use for it elsewhere. After that, the air service was the only regular means of transportation and that of course was followed by an increase



of KLM's passenger bookings. Analogous circumstances in other parts of the Caribbean had similar results, and from 1941 on we saw the load factor rise steadily.

### Good-bye to the DC-5s

In April the Management in Batavia decided that the two DC-5s, of which we felt so proud, should be transferred to the East Indies. As already explained, at that time there were many good reasons for that decision. In the East Indies they were short of equipment; in the West Indies we had more than was justified by the traffic expected. Moreover, as mentioned before, KLM had a lot of difficulties in obtaining the spare parts and tools needed for the overhaul of the engines of these planes. Though we were very sorry to see the DC-5s leave, their transfer to the East Indies lightened to a great extent KLM's heavy financial burdens and, observing the financial results of 1941, the favorable influence of this measure could clearly be seen in the accounts.

On May 29th the ZONVOGEL started from Hato for the last time and on June 10th it was followed by the WAKAGO. We had the same sad feeling you have when you say good-bye to a couple of friends you have known for only a short time but of whom you have grown very fond. It is gratifying to know that only nine months later those two planes played an important role in the evacuation from Java to Australia and thus saved scores of men, women and children from the terrible fate that many of their compatriots are now suffering.

So the fleet again consisted of the four Lockheeds and the two Fokkers, of which one still was constantly chartered by the Curacao Government. With the five planes available for commercial operations, KLM could very nicely operate its slightly compressed airmet.

On February 20th Bouman returned from his trip to the Netherlands East Indies and again took over the management from Steensma. The latter left for the United States and then went over to the East Indies himself. He returned from there a few months later and is at present at his former post as KLM representative in Lisbon.

It was mentioned before that as far back as 1936 KLM had opened negotiations with the Haitian Government for the operation of a service to Curacao, which culminated in a contract. In 1940, after the contemplated expansion eastward seemed pretty well established, the discussions with the parties concerned, in view of the opening of that line, were renewed; however, it was found that PAA was not able to permit the use of the small landing field because of extensive improvements that shortly would be taken in hand, and so we were more or less stuck.

*Official reception of Captain and passengers of first plane to Jamaica, August 8, 1941, in Myrtle Bank Hotel, Kingston; 3rd from left: F. L. Brown, Deputy Colonial Sec'y; Mr. Bouman; Mr. F. H. Robertson, Tourist Trade Commissioner; Mr. Charles d'Costa, agent for KLM*

## Regular service to Jamaica

During 1940 the military authorities in Jamaica had started the construction of an adequate airport on a peninsula south of the harbor called Palisadoes. Up to that time there had been no landing field on the island; PAA operated its service via Jamaica with Sikorsky Clippers. After the completion of the field it was technically possible for KLM to open a line to Jamaica and, via the diplomatic channels, a request for a permit was filed with the British Government. On June 5, 1941 we received word that this request had been granted. This was a highly appreciated decision, recalling the Trinidad incident of the year before. The preparations were quietly taken in hand and, as a result of the cooperation of the local authorities and the energetic support of our agents, Messrs. Lascelles de Mercado, the once-weekly service could be inaugurated on August 19th.

There were many reasons to expect that this service would be a success. In the first place, in Jamaica the KLM lines would connect with PAA to Miami, thus shortening the trip from Curacao to Miami by another three hours, while lowering the total fare (of which, by the way, KLM would then cash a larger part). Further, the KLM service provided by far the fastest connection between the two largest British islands in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Jamaica. Finally, Jamaica boasted many good hotels, beautiful scenery and cool mountain air, things not found in Curacao, and especially appreciated since the people there could not repatriate for their leave in Europe. Actually scores of the oil companies' employees with their families and many others went over to Jamaica via KLM to spend a refreshing vacation.

The extremely cordial reception the manager of KLM and the crew, with Hakkenberg in command, received when the first plane landed on August 19, 1941, was beyond all expectation. On that first flight they took with them the Personnel Managers of the oil companies so that they themselves could see the many attractions offered by Jamaica.

Early in 1941 there arrived in Curacao a KLM employee well known to the passengers traveling on KLM's Amsterdam-Batavia line, Mr. Fred Meuser. He had been the local manager in Naples, which place became a most important station after the terminus of the Amsterdam-Batavia line had been shifted to that city on account of the war. After Italy joined Germany in the war Meuser first went to Switzerland and finally he was assigned for duties in Curacao. In connection with the preparations for the Jamaica line he was temporarily



*View from Shaw Park Hotel, Jamaica, where many people from Curacao spend vacations*

stationed on that island, where he ably solved the many problems that always arise when opening a new service. Meuser stayed there until the end of November, when he was called up in the Netherlands Army; after some time he left for duties on the other side of the Atlantic.

One of the troubles experienced in Jamaica resulted from the fact that the airport was after all a military base and there were no buildings available for commercial purposes. We had to stay at a respectful distance from all military installations. The site where the authorities proposed that KLM erect its station building was nothing more than swamp, and we were not very eager to put up a rather expensive structure, plus a paved road leading to it, since KLM had been granted only a temporary permit to use the field. After many discussions Meuser, with the valuable assistance of the Tourist Trade Commissioner, Mr. F. H. Robertson, finally succeeded in making a convenient arrangement with the customs and immigration authorities; customs inspection, immigration clearance, censor and all those rather annoying but in war time unavoidable formalities, could be accomplished in the cool and well-equipped building of the Jamaica Tourist Board in Kingston. Therefore the passengers were transferred "in bond" between the airport and the city.

The traffic on this latest extension gradually became so heavy that pretty soon, in October, the number of weekly flights between Curacao and Jamaica was increased from one to two.

## Developments in Surinam

The increased demand for aluminum for the aircraft industry in the United States resulted in a substantial rise in the export of bauxite from Surinam; consequently labor had to be imported, trade and travel increased, and so we saw the Curacao-Paramaribo line, which had been a somewhat ailing baby in its first two years, grow to a healthy plump infant. Soon its load factor reached figures that previously would have sounded fantastic.

After the local services from Trinidad to Barbados and Ciudad Bolivar had been suspended there was, of course, no further justification in flying Curacao-Paramaribo in two days; so since early in 1941 we flew outward to Paramaribo via Barcelona and Port of Spain in one day, leaving Curacao rather early and making the 1050 mile return trip the next day.

As reported before, in the beginning of 1940 the Netherlands Government decided to grant a sizeable loan to the Surinam Government to enable it to convert the Zandery field into a first class airport. The unfortunate events in May 1940, when the Netherlands were overrun by the Nazis, put a halt to the realization of this important project, because Surinam itself saw no possibility of financing so big a plan with its own limited funds. KLM was not the only party interested in an improvement of this field; Pan American Airways as a

matter of fact for some time had carried out most of their services between Trinidad and Rio de Janeiro with DC-3 land planes. Only on the "local" service, which was still operated on a once-weekly schedule with flying boats, a stop was made at Paramaribo. However, it was their definite plan to switch over to the exclusive use of land planes on this route as soon as the necessary facilities had been completed. Therefore it was not surprising that they contacted the Surinam Government and proposed that it allow PAA to improve the Zandery field at their own expense, under certain conditions which would give the "Surinaamse Vliegvelld Exploitatie Maatschappij," a company founded for this specific purpose, definite and long lasting claims on this field. When those conditions became known many Netherlands regretted the fact that the Government had not found a way to finance the improvement of Zandery without granting such far-reaching rights to a foreign organization. Anyway, the contract was signed and not long afterwards the most elaborate construction equipment began to pour in over the narrow railway track to the Zandery field. The building of the runways took much more time than originally envisaged. Some standard construction methods on which the American contractors had relied, proved not to be feasible for the somewhat peculiar soil condition on Zandery. The whole project was supervised by the U. S. Government and was virtually completed at the end of 1941.

Another important work connected with the airport plan was the widening and hard-surfacing of the existing road and its extension as far as the airfield. The period of the faithful but primitive "draisine" had come to an end.

## Modern radio stations on Curacao and Aruba

During the course of 1941 some improvements, though mostly on a smaller scale, again were carried out on Hato airport. In view of the fast growing importance of the aviation radio organization on both Curacao and Aruba, the Government decided to build modern radio stations on the airfields. The two stations were almost identical; they were equipped with high and low frequency transmitters of 400 watts power, a set of selective receivers and a gasoline generator in case the main power supply might be cut off. A pair of steel lattice masts, eighty feet high and provided with red obstruction lights, was erected near each building, from which the operator on duty had a clear view of the entire airfield. Both stations were completed in September 1941.

In connection with contemplated flights after dark, on some of the projecting tops of the cliff on the west side of the field which protruded close to the approach path of the planes, red obstruction lights were placed.

Gradually more tools and other technical equipment were received from the U. S. A., so that KLM's workshops were at last becoming a full-fledged maintenance base.







*Minister Welter welcomed upon arrival from Maracaibo by Governor Wouters*



*The next day Minister Welter inspects a Guard of Honor of Netherlands Marines at Hato airport*



*Often we have to carry huge loads of baggage*

Towards the end of the year, in striking contrast to the year before when there was more seating capacity available on practically all our services than could be sold, we gradually began to feel the shortage of equipment and of personnel. The planes were many more hours in the air than before, and much of the overhaul and maintenance work had to be done at night, which put a great strain on the small technical staff. Those men deserve a lot of credit for their unflinching zeal and devotion.

### Financial results in 1941

During 1941 we flew practically the same number of hours as in 1940, 4,000; however, the number of seat miles offered was lower as a result of the transfer of the two largest planes, which had twice the seat capacity of the Lockheeds. But the number of passenger miles sold increased considerably, by 26% for the full year. We have already mentioned the growing traffic to and from Surinam. The traffic to Venezuela also showed a remarkable increase as the oil industry in that country was working at top speed in connection with the war needs in Europe. Due to the reduced expenses, brought about by some reduction in personnel, but largely due to the elimination of the depreciation and insurance costs for the DC-5s, and on the other side the increased revenue, it was very encouraging to note that in July 1941, for the first time, KLM's gross income, including the subsidy, showed a small excess over expenses. Though the net revenue from July to December inclusive did not entirely compensate for the loss during the first six months, on December 31, 1941 we were in the "red" for only a very small amount.

A plan that had been considered for a long time was to take the dispatch activities in Curacao into our own hands. Though KLM was entirely satisfied and grateful for the good services rendered by Messrs. Maduro during the past years as dispatch agents, it was felt that we should handle this detail ourselves in view of the growth of the operations. One of the employees of Messrs. Maduro, Mr. Van Mannekus, who had already been in charge of the dispatch activities for a long time, joined the KLM family for this purpose.

In view of the growing traffic the DC-5s were missed very much; one solution to increasing somewhat the seating capacity of at least one of the planes was found in reshaping the cabin of the good SNIP in such a way that it would comfortably hold fifteen people instead of twelve, as before. This idea was ably developed and carried out by Uriot's men; it was a modification that soon paid for itself.

## Minister Welter visits Curacao and Surinam

In May 1941 His Excellency Charles Welter, at that time Minister of Overseas Territories of the Netherlands Government in London, the first Minister of the Crown ever to visit the West Indies, came to Curacao. Mr. Welter arrived in Maracaibo by PAA, where the entire local Netherlands Colony was present to greet the Minister. Time was very limited and shortly afterwards, piloted by Groeneveld, the Lockheed left Grana de Oro field and landed at Hato in pitch darkness, where Mr. Welter was welcomed by the Governor of Curacao and many other authorities. During the next two days he was able, due to his extensive use of KLM planes, to visit Aruba and Bonaire. He was then flown over to Paramaribo, where he stayed for several days and finally took the plane again for Curacao. It was pure coincidence that we had been preparing to fly one of the DC-5s back to the United States at that time, so that His Excellency could be offered a comfortable and easy ride to Miami. A map was prepared for Mr. Welter showing in detail the trips he had made by KLM planes and all the places he had visited in those few days, thus demonstrating very clearly the time savings represented by air transportation.

## Dr. Ysselstyn replaces Bouman

In July 1941 Bouman received a telegram from the Board of Directors of KNILM in Batavia, stating they had appointed Dr. D. A. Ysselstyn, assistant manager of KNILM, to succeed him as Manager of the West Indies section. On September 9th, Bouman turned the Management over to Dr. Ysselstyn. After serving some time with the Netherlands Purchasing Commission in New York, Bouman, in August 1942, was appointed Executive Secretary to the Board of KLM and KNILM, which had been set up in New York after the occupation of the Netherlands Indies by Japan.

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor and the European war became a global one. From then on the shipping services in the Caribbean were even more curtailed; German submarines had made their appearance in those waters. KLM's West Indies traffic was considerably influenced by the suspension of the Grace Line's rapid service between the United States and Curacao. The time had arrived when the people of Curacao would really feel that there was a war raging; many difficult, heretofore unforeseen problems had to be solved; additional strain was put upon KLM's already too small staff, while demands for air transportation grew larger and larger.

## Traffic results in 1941

In 1941 KLM carried 20,513 passengers on all lines in the Caribbean, three thousand more than in the previous year. The airnetwork extended over 2,722

miles. Mile production was a trifle lower than in 1940—644,470 miles in 3,954 hours. The number of passenger miles sold however jumped 26% to 5,451,000; freight and excess baggage, as well as airmail, increased in almost the same proportion, to reach 455,822 and 50,478 pounds. During the last seven months only five planes were available, four Lockheeds and the SNIP, the other Fokker still being permanently chartered by military authorities. The personnel in the course of the year had decreased to 95, ten less than on December 31, 1940.



# 1942

## The Netherlands Indies lost

The war in the Pacific was not going well at all. Encountering comparatively minor resistance from the outnumbered Allied Forces, the Japanese swept southward with bold strokes. Netherlands submarines took a heavy toll of Japanese shipping and fought a heroic delaying action south of the Philippines. Almost fifty percent of the Netherlands Indies Airforce was lost in its gallant attempt to assist the British to hold Singapore. Its mostly obsolete bombers and fighters were no match for the Zeros. After the fall of Singapore the outlook for the Netherlands East Indies was black, but still there was a hope that Java could be held, if assistance from the allies could be rushed in. However, this island soon suffered its first bombardments from the air. Already some of KNILM's planes had been shot down when they were caught by the Japs while on their dangerous missions to and from the battle zones, carrying up war materials, military personnel and medicines, taking back wounded soldiers,



women and children. It soon became apparent that KNILM's bases in Java would be submitted to heavier bombardments and so the Government decided that, in view of the necessity of maintaining the air connection with Australia as long as possible, KNILM's main base should be moved from Java to Australia. Part of KNILM's Management and ground staff, and practically the entire flying personnel of both KNILM and KLM were transferred to that country. Only about half of the KNILM and KLM equipment at that time was not severely damaged or entirely lost through enemy action. Under the most hazardous conditions the flight crews carried out a large number of daring trips between Java and Australia, the last planes loaded with women, children and essential officials whom the Government had ordered evacuated and who left only after the Japs had landed on the island in great force. Not a single fighter plane was available to give them the badly needed protection. Rupplin, formerly senior pilot in Curacao, was in command of one of the last planes that had been destined to go, but shortly before he could take off another aerial bombardment was loosened on the KNILM base and Rupplin's DC-5 was blasted to pieces. That is the reason why, to our great sorrow, we had to report to Rupplin's many friends in Curacao that he was taken prisoner by the Japanese, sharing the horrible fate of thousands of his compatriots in the East Indies.

Soon afterwards the KNILM Management, headed by Major Versteegh, settled in Sydney. In March, according to a decision taken by the Board of Directors, who unfortunately could not be evacuated from Java before the Japanese occupied the island, a new Board was formed in New York, composed of Netherlands citizens, most of whom had previously been associated with KLM or KNILM in one way or another.

Originally the new Board was composed of Messrs. A. A. Pauw, J. van den Broek, H. Jacobson and E. C. Zimmerman. Later Mr. D. A. Delprat, previously a Director in the Indies, was also appointed to the Board; after departure from New York of Mr. Pauw and Mr. Van den Broek two new members were elected, Mr. Prins and Mr. J. Cremer. Bouman, at that time working for the Netherlands Purchasing Commission, was asked to fulfill the duties of Executive Secretary to the Board.

Major Versteegh and his small administrative staff faced a very difficult task. Many of KNILM's technical experts were urgently needed in the Netherlands Navy Air Force and consequently were enlisted. With the remaining personnel an amazing number of vital flights were made on behalf of the U. S. military authorities in Australia. However, after a few months, owing to various compulsory circumstances, the decision had to be made to sell the remaining equipment, totaling ten Lockheed and Douglas transports, to the U. S. military command. The greater part of the flying personnel were called up for war duties, which they are performing gallantly and with admirable skill.

## Management transferred to New York

As KNILM no longer had its own operations in Australia the Board decided to transfer Management of the KNILM and KLM to New York. The reason for this was that their major concern was the West Indies division; further the line operated under the charter of the British Overseas Airways Corporation between England and Lisbon, and finally the planning for the post-war period, which, because of the outstanding position of America with regard to the production of transport aircraft, could best be conducted in the United States. Actually the transfer of the KNILM administrative staff to New York took place in the beginning of 1945, but already in the summer of 1942 Major Versteegh paid visits to the operation centers of KLM in England and the West Indies.

To lessen somewhat the shortage of pilots in the West Indies, two KNILM pilots were transferred from Australia, Mr. P. Badings, who arrived in May 1942, followed by Mr. J. Rouffaer in June. With Rouffaer came Mr. J. A. Augustyn of the engineering staff of KNILM. In view of the greatly increased operations in the Caribbean, which required much more specialized organization, the latter was appointed chief of the technical department in Curacao, with Uriot second in command.

## Fluctuating traffic demands

Fundamentally there were not so many changes in the West Indies schedules during 1942. Minor revisions, however, had to be made several times,

following each other so rapidly that they could hardly be incorporated in the printed timetables. These frequently were caused by unexpected demands for special flights in connection with the war and, even more than in former years, by the urgent necessity of providing fast through connections with other lines, in particular with PAA's services to the United States.

As a result of the almost total lack of any other means of transportation, some lines, which up to 1941 only showed a light traffic, were booked to capacity, and waiting lists became necessary. On the other hand, on a few of the other lines, notably the Maracaibo service, there was less traffic than before. In view of the necessity of keeping the schedules within the limits of the maximum allowable total of flying hours, eventually all services had to be closely adapted to the immediate demands, rather than paying strict attention to the otherwise desired uniformity, future possibilities or other wishes, which in these strenuous times had to be considered more or less as luxuries.

## Charter flights between Aruba and Miami

One of the organizations most hampered by the lack of boat transportation was the Lago Oil Company in Aruba. The American members of their staff always did a lot of traveling between Curacao and the United States; moreover, vastly increased demands for oil products obliged this company to send out many more construction and refinery workers than usual. They had approached KLM back in 1941 regarding the possibility of chartering planes to ferry their staff between Aruba and Miami. It can easily be understood that some time



*Much increased number of flying hours demands intensified maintenance*

*KLM ticket office in Willemstad, Curacao; Van Mannekus behind the counter*



BY AIRMAIL  
PAR AVION  
K.L.M. - ROYAL DUTCH AIR LINES

PER KLM

Curacao Trading Co.  
Paramaribo.

ERSTE NEDERLANDSCHE POSTVLUCHT  
K.L.M.  
CURAÇAO  
TRINIDAD  
SURINAME

service Trinidad - Ciudad  
Royal Dutch Air Lines.

Messers Casalta & Battistini,  
CIUDAD BOLIVAR,  
VENEZUELA.

1st FLIGHT IN REGULAR K.L.M. SERVICE  
CURAÇAO - BARCELONA - TRINIDAD  
2nd MAY 1940

LUCHTPOST VIA AIR MAIL CORRIO AEREO  
ROYAL DUTCH AIR LINES  
MR. MANUEL CHAP  
K.L.M. - Agen

First flight covers issued with inauguration  
of new KLM routes in West Indies

K.L.M. VLUCHT  
PARAMARIBO-CURAÇAO

Den Weled. Heer L.A. Bouman  
KONINKLIJKE LUCHTVAART MAATSCHAPPIJ.  
CURAÇAO.  
Ned. West Indie.

Mrs. Hascelles, de Mercado & Co., Ltd.  
Agents Royal Dutch Air Lines.  
Kingston Jamaica

MORRIS E. CURIEL & SONS  
CURAÇAO, N.W.I.  
First National Bank

K.L.M.  
ROYAL DUTCH AIR LINES  
PARAMARIBO.

WRITTEN IN DUTCH

K.L.M.  
ROYAL DUTCH AIR LINES  
WILLEMSTAD - CURAÇAO  
NEW YORK, U.S.A.

FIRST OFFICIAL FLIGHT  
CURAÇAO - U.S.A.  
WILLEMSTAD - ARUBA - HAITI  
JAMAICA - CUBA  
FLORIDA

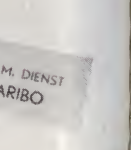
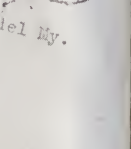
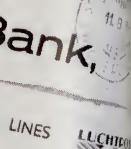
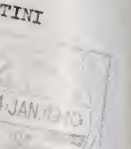
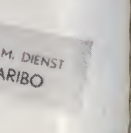
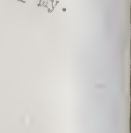
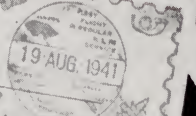
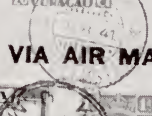
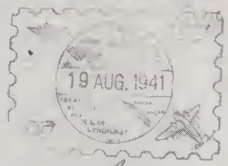
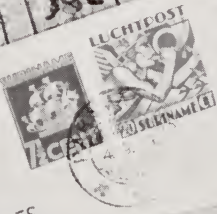
Mrs. G. Bouman  
- Gerling  
360 West Central Parkway  
New York

Mr. C.F.C. Meuser  
c/o Lascelles de Mercado & Co.  
Kingston  
Jamaica

K.L.M. - ROYAL DUTCH AIR LINES - CIA. REAL HOLANDESA DE AVIACION  
CURAÇAO - N.W.I. DEPTO. DE LAS ANTILLAS

Per EERSTE VLUCHT v.d. K.L.M. DIENST  
CURAÇAO - PARAMARIBO

EXAMINED BY  
EXAMINED BY



Curacao N.W.I.  
Cables: Transora

VIA AIR MAIL - CORRIO AEREO  
ROYAL DUTCH AIR LINES

De Firma CASALTA & BATTISTINI  
Agenten der K.L.M.  
CIUDAD BOLIVAR  
Venezuela

INGSVLUCHT K.L.M. DIENST  
CURAÇAO - CIUDAD BOLIVAR

Den Weledelgestrengen Heer  
L.F. Bouman,  
d/a Firma S.E.L. Maduro & Sons,  
Willemsstad,  
Curacao.

PER VLIEGTUIG  
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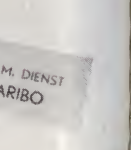
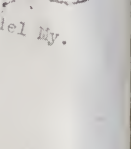
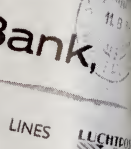
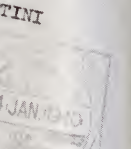
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1st FLIGHT  
TRINIDAD to BARBADOS

CIA REAL HOLANDESA DE AVIACION  
ROYAL DUTCH AIR LINES  
KLM

19 SEP 1938



PORT OF SPAIN  
745AM  
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38  
TRINIDAD

4 JAN 1940

19 SEP 1938

19 AUG 1941

19 AUG 1941

19 AUG 1941

elapsed before the formalities with the U. S. Government concerning the permit for these charter flights, and all preparations in connection with dispatch, flight supervision, radio facilities and so forth had been completed. The requested permits pending, one of the two weekly services from Curacao to Jamaica was provisionally extended to Havana on a charter basis. From Havana to Miami PAA operated an air service several times daily, so that from that point on the bottleneck, though still existing, became a little wider.

In 1938 KLM had appointed as its agents in Cuba Messrs. Dussaq and Toral. As soon as the plan for the extension of the line to Havana ripened they were requested to assist in obtaining the essential permits from the Cuban Government and prepare all further facilities necessary to the opening of the service. They did all this in a most competent way and due to their old and well established relations with the highest officials, the required formalities were soon completed.

Early in 1942 the intermediate landing in Barcelona, on the way from Curacao to Trinidad and Paramaribo, was dropped. That station yielded very few passengers and anyway the planes on that route were filled to capacity with travelers from Curacao to Paramaribo and return.

### April schedules

In April 1942 the following schedule was put into effect:

Curacao—Aruba (local) . . . . .	nine times per week
“ —Aruba-Maracaibo . . . . .	four times per week
“ —La Guaira . . . . .	four times per week
“ —Bonaire . . . . .	twice each week
“ —Jamaica . . . . .	twice each week
“ —Barranquilla . . . . .	once each week
“ —Trinidad-Paramaribo . . . . .	once each week
“ —Coro . . . . .	once each week

Because of higher expenses and general rise in living standards, the passenger tariffs were increased on an average of 10%, and most of the inexpensive round-trip tickets, which a few years before were introduced experimentally to stimulate the traffic, had to be cancelled. In May it was decided to suspend the Coro service for the time being; the traffic to that place, as a result of the war, had become low and every flying hour saved contributed to KLM's ability to carry out more charter flights in direct connection with the war effort.

In March KLM had the pleasure of returning to Barbados, though it was only for a limited number of charter flights, made for the purpose of transporting scores of laborers who were engaged by the oil refineries in Curacao and Aruba.

Renewed action of enemy submarines in the Caribbean and the cancellation of shipping services, more and more showed their effect on the demand for space on the air services; the constant fluctuations in the passenger traffic involved many intricate problems, the solution of which often demanded nothing less than ingenuity from the understaffed traffic department.

Altogether there was a steady rise and, if KLM had had more or larger equipment and more flying personnel available, the traffic figures would easily have surpassed those actually shown in our report for this year.

### KLM sets up its own ticket office

In January 1942 a reorganization was introduced in our commercial set-up.

Previously in Curacao KLM itself did not sell tickets, but left that entirely in the hands of its agents, Messrs. S. E. L. Maduro & Sons and the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company. Owing to the increasing traffic and also in view of the fact that the West Indies section had to be entirely self-supporting since the occupation of Holland, it was decided that as of January 1, 1942 KLM should open its own booking office in town. This measure was by no means a sign of dissatisfaction with the service of these agents; on the contrary, we had always the greatest praise for their activities and interest in our behalf. It was only a natural course, that previously had occurred several times in European cities, where KLM, after some time, established its own ticket offices.

### Traffic record in August

In August 1942 a remarkably high traffic figure was scored. The number of passengers on scheduled and charter flights in that month equalled the total number of passengers carried in the entire year 1935; but these passengers in August 1942 travelled almost 800,000 miles, as against a little more than 216,000 by those customers in all 1935. Freight, too, was carried in rapidly increasing amounts. In October it reached its monthly maximum for 1942, being over 19 tons express plus 10 tons excess baggage and in addition 6,500 pounds of airmail.

Up to the month of June quite a number of charter flights as far as Havana were completed. During the course of that month the United States Government granted a two-month permit to execute charter flights on behalf of the Lago Oil Company to Miami. An arrangement was made so that in each plane to Miami the Lago Oil Company would only occupy eight seats, consequently the two remaining seats in both directions could be sold to travelers not connected with that company. According to the United States regulations those two passengers were not allowed to go beyond Havana, Cuba. However by having these seats available KLM maintained a limited, but nevertheless regu-

lar public service from Curacao to Cuba and return. From July 1942 to August 1945, practically all the time, an average of two round-trips per week were flown between Curacao and Miami in charter to the Lago Oil Company.

The number of passengers between Curacao and Cuba, however, was limited, mainly due to an old Cuban law which makes it extremely difficult for a Netherlands citizen to obtain a Cuban visa.

In July Governor Wouters was succeeded by His Excellency J. Kasteel. A special flight was carried out to provide transportation for the departing Governor and his family to San Jose, Costa Rica. This was the first flight of a KLM plane to Central America.

## The airfields on Curacao and Aruba greatly extended

In the beginning of 1942 the Dutch troops on Curacao and the other islands were reinforced by American military units, among them bomber and fighter squadrons of the U. S. Army Air Force. For the landing and start of their tremendously fast planes the Curacao and Aruba airfields were of insufficient dimensions. The Public Works Department of Curacao did another fine job; in a very short time Hato's runway was extended to about twice its original size. Many installations and new buildings were erected in connection with the military requirements. From a medium size civil airport, in a few months Hato became a first class military field. Necessitated by the military demands, in those months there was much more money spent for it than during all the previous years together.

Even more revolutionary improvements were required for the Aruba field, the big problem there being that it was squeezed in between the sea and the main road between Oranjestad and St. Nicholaas. A few years before it had been suggested that the road be diverted a quarter of a mile to the north, so that the field could be made that much longer. This, however, would have involved the expenditure of a large sum of money, so the plan was shelved for the time being. This time the Curacao Government had to take bold steps. A new road was laid out along the south coast, so that the field could be extended northward over a considerable distance. The diversion of the road caused KLM's little station building to be at an undesirable spot. Consequently the Government built a very nice and well designed permanent building near the south edge of the field. This building has been in use since September 1942. The twice-enlarged wooden structure that had served our purpose so well for more than seven years was taken over by the military detachment on the field.

## First trip to Ciudad Trujillo

In August, for the first time, a flight was made straight north across the Caribbean to Ciudad Trujillo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. During

the last few years there had been a rather heavy traffic by boat between Curacao and that country and the curtailment of the steamship lines induced us to investigate the possibility of an air service.

## The Parkiet is lost

August 22, 1942 was a day of great anxiety, soon followed by deep sorrow. On that morning the Lockheed PARKIET left the Paramaribo field on schedule, arrived at Piarco and, after the customary stop, started for Curacao. The weather was rather unfavorable, though no worse than our pilots had often experienced during the wet season in the Caribbean. Shortly after the PARKIET left the field, the radio contact was broken, but as no reports whatsoever came in there was no immediate cause to fear an accident. But the plane did not arrive in Curacao on time and therefore an alarm was sent to the various stations. Search planes were sent out the same afternoon and night. There was, however, no indication of the fate of the PARKIET. Early in the morning the reconnaissance flights were resumed. It was many hours later that a report came in saying the PARKIET was found, smashed to pieces, not far from the Piarco field in the dense jungle. All occupants had been killed instantly by the terrific impact. A careful investigation showed no mechanical defects. It was the first accident in almost seven years of continuous operation. From innumerable sides KLM received expressions of sympathy, proving how much the people of Curacao and Surinam considered KLM a part of their own and how many good friends we had all over the Caribbean.

The ten passengers killed were all of Dutch nationality; they were military men as well as construction workers on their way from Surinam to Curacao. Several still had relatives in occupied Holland, which seemed to make this event even more sad. KLM lost three able crewmen—Badings, the pilot, who had only arrived a half year before from Australia; De Bruyn, who had entered our service in Curacao in 1936 as an apprentice mechanic and skillfully worked his way up to a flight engineer; and radio officer C. van Oyen, who came out with the photographic crew in 1939, a fine fellow, a very competent radio operator and valuable instrument expert. Their passing away was a heavy loss for our company. The PARKIET was an irreparable wreck, from which only some minor parts could be salvaged.

This accident imposed an even greater strain on the remaining flight personnel and depleted equipment. More scheduled trips, originally flown with Lockheeds, had to be carried out with the Fokker planes. With the heavy demand for charter flights still undiminished, some of the less profitable lines had to be further curtailed.

Passenger traffic in those days was still increasing and in fact the KLM booking-office in Curacao received many more applications for seats and carriage



of freight than could be accepted. The Government introduced a priority system, which was undoubtedly the only way to secure places for vital passenger travel, but at the same time further complicated the task of the understaffed traffic department.

How seemingly unrelated conditions can influence airline traffic was demonstrated by a decline in bookings on the Jamaica line in the fall of 1942. As told before, this service was greatly favored by employees of the oil companies, who were allowed to spend their vacations on that island. However, as in several other places, gasoline and tires became available only for essential driving in Jamaica and without a car one could hardly reach the attractive vacation resorts on the beautiful north coast. So there was a sharp drop in vacation travelers to Jamaica, which, on account of the already over-burdened schedule, was the reason to temporarily suspend one of the two weekly round-trips between Curacao and that point.

In September PAA inaugurated a new Caribbean air service from Miami via Camaguey, Port au Prince and Ciudad Trujillo to La Guaira, Venezuela, with Douglas DC-3 landplanes. At the same time they applied to the Curacao Government for permission to make an intermediate landing at Curacao, three times each week. This was not granted immediately. The refusal of the United States to KLM's request in 1936 to be allowed to operate a service from Curacao to Miami had never been revoked, though the charter for the Lago Oil Company from Aruba to Miami continued on a practically twice-weekly schedule.

## Invitations for Miami

However, an important event was in the offing. On September 10, 1942 the Civil Aeronautics Board in Washington, D. C. published their much discussed Docket 778, stating that on account of the serious shortage of transportation facilities, due to the war, immediate inauguration of additional air services might be of considerable aid in alleviating this shortage. Further quoting the official document, the Board introduced a proceeding to determine whether permits for the inauguration of air service by American or foreign carriers between Miami and Central America and the Latin American countries should be issued, whereby the applicants should state the time that they expected to be able to start this service and what equipment they had available for the purpose.

KLM's United States representative, at that time Mr. F. C. Aronstein, assisted by Mr. Versteegh and Dr. Ysselstyn, who came over from Curacao, filed the required documents—pages and pages of printed statements, supplemented by maps, financial estimates, proposed schedules, personnel lists, description of repair facilities, stocks of spare parts available, etc., etc. Then followed hearings in Washington and then—a long silence.

We learned that a total of fifteen companies, six of which were American,



*Willemstad from 8,000 feet*

had filed applications, but eight of these were dismissed before any hearings took place. Of the remaining seven, five were foreign and two American carriers.

The final decision of the Civil Aeronautics Board was not made public until April 1945. The five foreign carriers mentioned before, among them KLM, received permits to start operations on most of the routes they had applied for. Much had to be done, however, before we were able to inaugurate this service; the flight crews had to be instructed and the equipment had to be adapted according to the rules applying to air operations over U. S. domestic territory. That took more time and more effort than had been expected. KLM's first scheduled trip to Miami as a public service took place in August 1945. More about this flight will appear in next year's report. The other carriers seemed to have had their troubles too, because by then there was only one other company that actually started a service to Miami.

During the time the charter flights to Miami were carried out the service was flown via Havana. As the Rancho Boyeros airfield was considered unsafe for use by the fast Lockheed 14's, the regular service was planned via a centrally located airport in Cuba, (Camaguey) and further it was decided to include Kingston (Jamaica) as well as Port au Prince, Haiti. One trip each week was to go via the former port and one via Haiti, where the field in the meantime had been considerably enlarged and provided with hard-surfaced runways. A new contract between the Government of Haiti and KLM for the operation of scheduled services was entered into in August 1945.



*Saba offers little opportunity to build an airport*

It should be understood that this permission to operate a service from Curacao to Miami was of a strictly temporary character. It was granted for three months, to be extended each time for an equal period at the discretion of the C.A.B.; but it would in any case expire six months after the end of the war. Though we were completely in the dark as to what the future would bring in this respect, we nevertheless were confident that in the post-war era a reciprocal agreement between the governments concerned might keep the door to the U. S. open for KLM.

The last months of 1942 brought universally bad weather and exceptionally heavy rains. The Bonaire field was drenched, so that the service had to be cancelled for a considerable period. Wet weather in Curacao often is accompanied by illness; the personnel of KLM had its share, again increasing the strain on the remaining staff. Nevertheless, some extra charters were carried out to Ciudad Trujillo, from which place even foodstuffs were flown by plane to Curacao; on one of these occasions the Lockheed was filled with 1400 pounds of cheese. The Paramaribo and Trinidad services were practically booked to capacity on each trip.

## Traffic results in 1942

And so ended the year 1942, which showed an unprecedented amount of traffic: 25,817 passengers, 544,000 pounds of freight and excess baggage and 56,500 pounds of airmail. As never before, the charter flights formed a great part of KLM's operations; almost 200,000 miles were flown in charter, equaling over 2,000,000 passenger miles, 77 times the number of charter passenger miles of 1941. The total number of passenger miles, line and charter flights combined, was over 7,071,000, more than double the figure for 1941. Against 3,934 in 1941, the planes were 5,596 hours in the air, a notable achievement for the technical department. The route mileage at the end of the year had increased to 3,128.

Whereas the expenses were only 20% higher than the year before, the operating revenue was more than double. Instead of a limited operating loss there was a substantial profit. It was most gratifying that the Curacao and Surinam Governments could be advised that their subsidies, which KLM had enjoyed and appreciated so much in previous years to alleviate the operating loss, were not needed for the time being.

The greatly increased activities made it necessary to engage quite a few more employees, so that at the end of the year they numbered 154, a 40% increase over the previous year.



# 1943

## Reinforcement of flying staff

KLM's Caribbean operations in the beginning of 1943 continued practically in the same way as during the busy last quarter of 1942. It was fortunate that the Management in New York finally succeeded in getting some urgently needed personnel released from military service. Most of these people originated from the KNILM and they were temporarily put at the disposal of KLM in Curacao. By June 6th pilots R. van Rees and W. C. J. Versteegh, the latter a son of the Managing Director, arrived. Van Rees had distinguished himself particularly during the hazardous evacuation of one of the outer islands of the Netherlands Indies, on which occasion he was injured severely, fortunately without permanent harm. Both these pilots stayed for over a year in the West Indies, until they could be relieved by KLM pilots, who also came from Australia. A few months later another pilot, G. J. Schipper, arrived in Curacao. Mr. Schipper left his original company and joined KLM. Further, two radio operators, Mr. H. Buytendyk and Mr. J. J. Muller, were assigned to the West Indies, as well as three flight engineers, Messrs. Belie, Boon, and Weststraten, all experienced crewmen of the KLM Amsterdam-Batavia line; also three from KNILM, Messrs. Van Onselen, De Meel and Feith and in addition an instrument expert Mr. Colyn. These men were all extremely welcome reinforcements to the technical staff.

Though there was still no question of an abundance of personnel, we could at least breathe a little more freely and relieve to a limited extent the stress under which the original staff had worked, especially during the second half of 1942.

## Regular service to Ciudad Trujillo

Except for the important fact that the charter flights to Miami, pursuant to the permit from the U. S. Government, were converted into a regular service in August, and that a regular flight once every two weeks from Curacao to Ciudad Trujillo was added, the schedule underwent only minor changes. In accordance with the traffic demands one round-trip weekly was added to La Guaira; to Maracaibo one was suspended. The frequency of the Trinidad-Paramaribo and Barranquilla trips was changed twice to adapt them to the fluctuating requirements. However, on August 4th a new revised timetable was published, which included the new Miami service; as from that date the schedule remained unaltered until the end of 1943.

The fares in general were not changed, but the excess baggage rates were increased to the international level of 1% of the one-way passage fare.

The exceptionally heavy rains, which continued in the beginning of 1943,



*The Bay of St. Maarten island*

were prohibitive to the reopening of the Bonaire service. The Government of Curacao finally decided to construct a new airfield in Bonaire, suitable under all weather conditions. The project was actually started in December 1943, but unfortunately the progress was rather slow.

Though in 1942 it was already felt that we practically were running to full capacity, the number of passengers as well as their average route mileage steadily increased. During 1955 each passenger traveled an average of 71 miles. This figure doubled in 1959; in 1942 it increased to 260 miles, in 1943 to 350 miles, with a top in November of 400 miles average per passenger.

## St. Maarten gets an airfield

In the beginning of this story we mentioned the three small islands in the northeast corner of the Caribbean, that had also been Dutch territory for many centuries, namely: Saba, St. Eustatius and St. Maarten. These islands, though having a much better climate for agriculture than Curacao and Aruba, have only very limited economic value. For many years their budgets had to be supplemented by financial help from Curacao. The transportation facilities from

Curacao to the islands left much to be desired for a long time. It was not so long ago that one could only reach these spots by schooner, a trip enjoyable only for people with sturdy sea legs, lasting from five days with a favorable wind, or up to three weeks, when the weatherman was unfavorably disposed.

With the aid of a government subsidy the Royal Netherlands Steamship Company several years ago opened a fortnightly service to the Windward Islands with a small cargo steamer, which accommodated twelve passengers. This trip from Curacao, via Bonaire, to St. Maarten, took three days. After St. Maarten the ship visited Saba, St. Eustatius and the British Island of St. Kitts and returned to Curacao along the same route, the entire journey lasting two weeks. The war also caused an interruption of this connection and it is no wonder that, though there was not much hope for a financially self-supporting air service, KLM kept an eye on that isolated corner of the Caribbean.

As early as 1940 Holmberg, the airport manager in Curacao, made a trip to these islands to investigate the possibilities for the construction of an adequate airstrip on one of them. He put his conclusions down in an enlightening report. On Saba, just a volcano, rising steeply from the ocean, with its two tiny villages pasted against the lush green mountain sides, it was impossible to find a piece

of land where even a small airfield could be made. As for the other two islands, on St. Maarten there was some land suitable for an airfield, but the cost would be rather high, very high in comparison with the economical significance of the air service; on the Island of St. Eustatius, though of even less importance than St. Maarten, Holmberg found a site where an airstrip could be made at a small expense.

But again it was the war that expedited the fulfillment of KLM's wishes. The urgency for a fast connection with the Windward Islands for military and civil authorities had increased and the Caribbean had not yet been cleared of enemy submarines. Finally, the more expensive but definitely better location was adopted and the construction of a good airfield near Philipsburg, on St. Maarten, was decided upon.

One day in July, before this field had been completed, there was an urgent case that demanded quick transportation to Curacao. The only field in the vicinity was on the British Island of St. Kitts; so the KLM plane flew over to that island, northwest over the Caribbean, a distance of 550 miles, took aboard its passengers, who had come over from St. Maarten by motor launch, and carried them to Curacao in record time.

*Before first scheduled flight to Miami on August 17, 1943; l. to r.: engr. Slimmers, ass't traffic-mgr. Peereboom, Director of Gov't Radio Service Willemse, Gen'l Mgr. Dr. Ysselstyn, American Consul the Hon. Huddleston, Director of Pub. Works Groote, station-mgr. Clemens, Mrs. Huddleston, Mrs. Ysselstyn, radio-op. Broekhuizen, Capt. Hakkenberg, co-pilot Langenberg, flight-engr. Bak*

*Arrival in Miami of first scheduled plane. Capt. Hakkenberg is complimented by Rear Admiral Meyer Ranneft of Netherlands Embassy. At left, Mr. P. Prins, Board member of KLM; fourth from left, Mr. M. E. A. L. de Jong, traffic-mgr. KLM/KNILM. Far right, Mr. Eichholtz, station-mgr. of KLM in Miami*



## Curacao-Miami service inaugurated

As previously stated, it took quite some time before all preparations for the extension to Miami had been completed. Under temporary permission to make charter flights it had been possible to use the same operations methods as on the other lines in the Caribbean. However, as soon as KLM became a public carrier into American territory it was subject to the many times more complicated United States Government regulations. Besides the fact that the flight crews had to prove that they were able to use all navigational resources as installed in the U. S. and were thoroughly acquainted with the U. S. flight rules and regulations, the equipment, especially the radio sets, had to be supplemented by several special items, which as a result of the war, were often only obtainable after several months of patient waiting. We are inclined to believe that these complicated requirements were the main reason for several of the other companies, which had obtained similar permits, not actually starting the services they had applied for.

Finally, in mid-August, everything was ready, and on the 17th of that month the regular Curacao-Miami service was officially inaugurated.

Much interest was evidenced in this event. At Miami's 56th Street airport the TROEPIAAL landed ten passengers and 18,860 first flight covers for stamp collectors, 8 hours and 25 minutes after departure from Curacao. The plane was welcomed by Rear Admiral J. Meyer Ranneft, Naval Attaché at the Netherlands Embassy in Washington, the Dutch Consul in Miami, Mr. Van der Stempel and several United States military and civil authorities. The crew on this trip was composed of Captain Hakkenberg, co-pilot M. Langenberg (temporarily assigned for duties with KLM in 1945), flight engineer Bak and radio operator Broekhuyzen. Two members of the Board of KLM and KNILM and the Traffic Manager from New York, Mr. M. E. A. L. de Jong, were also present. It undoubtedly was one of the most important events in the history of KLM's West Indies section.

The traffic conditions had gradually become a little more stabilized and it was thought possible to come to a more permanent schedule, instead of having to adapt the service about every month to meet the rapidly changing situations. Because of that KLM could also order a new printed timetable, which for the first time appeared in a more luxurious edition with a brightly colored cover and illustrated with many interesting pictures.

One of the most radical changes in the schedule was in the Curacao-La Guaira service which, practically through all the years, had been flown in the morning hours. But now, after the opening of KLM's own Miami service, it became important to provide immediate through connection to and from Venezuela; the schedule was arranged in such a way that the local La Guaira plane left Hato after the arrival of the plane from Miami. It stayed overnight in La Guaira, left that station at an early hour the next morning and arrived in Curacao in time to enable passengers to transfer to the Miami plane.

*Captains Rouffaer and Bos in the cockpit of the MEEUW*



*KLM Lockheed in front of new station building of Avianca in Barranquilla*



*Interior of Barranquilla station building*



## New York staff members assist in Curacao

Several members of the staff of KNILM, at the time employed in the United States, were temporarily assigned to KLM in Curacao, to assist the General Manager with the many problems that arose with the expansion of the lines and the ever increasing traffic.

Mr. De Jong, mentioned before, stayed in Curacao during September and October; Mr. J. M. Mynlieff, secretary of KNILM, was there in August. Mr. J. P. De Bree, chief engineer of KNILM, temporarily residing in California, assisted chief engineer Augustyn in Curacao during three months in the spring with the reorganization of the technical department and with his planning for the future.

Mr. H. K. de Graaf, operations manager of KNILM, first in May, June and July, and again from September until the beginning of 1944 assisted with the expansion of the flight control office at Hato, a new department which had already been prepared by chief pilot Hakkenberg, and which had become more and more essential due to the tremendous increase in contemplated mileage. This organization, which contributed largely to the efficient operation of KLM's airlines in the Caribbean, had to be set up with a very limited and, in the beginning mostly unskilled, staff; the creation of this bureau was a great achievement for all concerned.

Miami having grown into an important KLM terminal, the Management stationed there Mr. L. Eichholtz (formerly station manager in Batavia), who is closely cooperating with KLM's local agent, Air Express International.

In August a tragic disaster occurred in Venezuela. Torrential floods engulfed a large part of the Orinoco Delta; there were hundreds of victims and thousands of homeless people who had lost everything they possessed. Spontaneously a

relief action was organized in Curacao, and KLM contributed its share by carrying a full planeload of medical equipment and clothing collected by the people of Curacao to La Guaira. This gesture was greatly appreciated by the Venezuelan authorities. It was a satisfaction to us to have this opportunity of reciprocating, be it to a small extent, the friendly cooperation KLM had for many years received from the Venezuelan Government.

In connection with the increased duties of the radio operator on the Miami route, the technical department carried out an alteration in the cabins of the Lockheeds, similar to an arrangement that had been in use in the Lockheeds in the East Indies. A partition was placed behind the first two passenger seats, one of which was already occupied by the radio man. In this way the operator had his own compartment where he could work undisturbed and communicate much more easily with the plane commander. The opposite seat was destined for the flight engineer as, unlike previously, on the Miami line all services were executed with a crew of four, of which two were fully qualified pilots. Of course there remained only nine seats available for passengers, but there was no way to get around this disadvantage.

It is understandable that from the very beginning of the air traffic boom in the Caribbean, KLM tried very hard to obtain some new equipment, and the situation became critical after the tragic accident which resulted in the total loss of the PARKIET. Through the Netherlands Purchasing Commission and the Netherlands Shipping and Economic Mission in New York, and with the support of the Curacao Government, every possible channel was probed to have some planes released for the operations in the West Indies, which became more and more of the highest importance in connection with the war. However, many other commercial carriers faced the same problem and the U. S. military require-

*One of the additions to KLM car-park; bus ferrying between La Guaira and Caracas*



*Shaw Park Hotel, Jamaica, vacation resort*



*Loading the Lockheed*



ments, which of course had preference, grew by the day. We have to be grateful that these endeavors after all did not remain entirely without result.

## Two Lodestars for Curacao

The U. S. Government finally released two Lockheed Lodestars, an improved and somewhat enlarged version of our Superlectras, to the Netherlands Government, to be put in use in the West Indies in direct relation to the war effort. The Netherlands Government charged KLM with the operation of these planes, and through this arrangement they could take over many special and charter flights, which previously had to be carried out with the older Lockheeds. In this way the PJ-AKA and PJ-AKB provided a badly needed relief.

During the following months several trips of special character were actually made by the Lodestars, after the pilots and aircrews had been given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the new ships and their different equipment. The cabins were originally fitted for use as military troop transports and they remained thus for some time before KLM was able to obtain the chairs and all the other items necessary to convert the planes into regular, comfortable passenger carriers. The presence of the Lodestars became of even more importance when the Lockheed TROEPIAAL, on a scheduled flight on October 29th, just after the take-off from Jamaica, experienced trouble with the landing gear. Pilot Versteegh handled this difficult situation in a masterly manner; he executed a smooth belly-landing so that the passengers and crew, entirely unhurt, could step out of the plane as if nothing at all had happened. However, the plane was badly damaged. A repair crew, with tools and replacement parts, was flown over from Curacao. It was not until January 15, 1944, more than two months of hard and strenuous work, before the plane was again in flying condition. After a test flight it returned safely to Curacao to have the finishing touches put to this difficult but skillfully executed repair job.

In October 1945 KLM was fortunate enough to see arrive in Curacao two veteran pilots, Captains G. J. te Roller and E. E. Hulsebos. These two men had played important and gallant parts in the evacuation of Java and had experienced several narrow escapes.

## Over 5,000 passengers in one month

As stated before, 1945 saw another increase in traffic on all lines and especially on the long-distance flights.

In the month of July, for the first time, more than 5,000 passengers were carried, almost 80,000 miles flown and close to 950,000 passenger miles sold, 50% more than in July 1942. In August the figures were even higher, with 5,564 passengers and over 100,000 miles flown. Seat miles flown and passenger miles sold reached top figures in November with approximately 1,200,000 and

1,000,000 respectively. That month 110,000 miles were flown in roughly 700 hours by the Lockheeds and the Fokkers combined.

## Traffic figures in 1945

In 1945 KLM carried in the West Indies, a total of 33,152 passengers as against 25,817 in 1942, and 724,675 pounds of freight and excess baggage as against 544,000 in 1942. The greatest increase proportionately was shown in the airmail, mainly due to the large shipments of letters to and from the American garrisons in Curacao and Aruba. From 56,500 pounds in 1942 this soared to 144,454 pounds. Passenger miles sold increased from 7,071,000 to more than 10,757,000, five times as many as in 1939. The number of flying hours increased by 34% to 7,474 hours. At the end of 1945 the airnetwork measured 4,540 miles.

As of December 31, 1945 the personnel numbered 191, twice the figure of two years previously.

## KLM's Management transferred to London

In September 1945 an important change in the general set-up of Netherlands' commercial aviation was made by the Dutch Government in London. We have already mentioned that after the occupation of Holland by the Germans and due to the fact that not one of KLM's original Management had been able to escape from the Nazis, the Government in London had charged the Board of Management of KNILM in Batavia with control of all KLM matters; and that the staff of KNILM, after the disastrous invasion of Java by the Japanese in February 1942 had been transferred to Australia; finally, that after the compulsory liquidation of KNILM's own operations in Australia, Major Versteegh, the Managing Director and his staff, in March 1945, moved to New York, where the Board of the company had already been established. From this central point the operations of KLM in the West Indies and in England were directed after that date.

The development of events all over the world induced the Netherlands Government in London to separate the management of the KLM from that of KNILM. In connection with the liberation of Holland, expected in a not too distant future, it was felt essential to secure the closest possible contact with the Board of Managing Directors of KLM. On the other hand, the interests of KNILM lie mainly beyond the Pacific and with the growing strength of the Allied Forces in that area, the time seemed not so far off that the Japs would be thrown out of the Netherlands Indies. KNILM should be ready to charge itself with vital air transportation in those regions, following right behind the armies, and therefore, the complete reconstruction of KNILM under the auspices of the Netherlands Indies Government had to be taken in hand with the least possible delay.

The Government consequently decided to appoint a new Board of Management of KLM in London as of September 8, 1945. The members of this Board were Mr. A. A. Pauw (formerly Chairman of the KNILM Board in New York), Mr. P. Rykens, Mr. G. J. Bensink, Professor J. de Boer, and Professor E. Hondelink. At its first meeting this Board appointed as Managing Directors Mr. H. Nieuwenhuis and Ir. P. J. C. Vos.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis has been in commercial aviation since 1925; before that he was an Officer of the Royal Dutch Navy and, since 1915, a pilot. In the service of KLM he was in charge of Rotterdam Airport and, since 1926, of Schiphol, at the same time being KLM's Operations Manager. Early in March he was appointed the leader in Java of the newly founded Royal Netherlands Indies Airways. He developed this into the prosperous Company we knew before the war. In 1938 he returned to Holland to become co-Managing Director of the KNILM with Mr. A. Plesman.

*The Royal Standard of Princess Juliana flies from the MEEUW*



*H.R.H. Princess Juliana and crew of the MEEUW, that brought Her from Miami to Surinam and back. L. to r.: Spanjaard, Rouffaer, H.R.H., Bos, Van der Ham*

Ir. P. J. C. Vos, a Reserve-Officer of the Dutch Air Force since 1928, has been an Engineer with the K.P.M. Shipping Company in the Dutch East Indies. He was with the Fokker Aircraft Factory until his spectacular escape by aeroplane to England during this war. He served with the R.A.F. as a pilot. Major Vos was posted to the Air Staff in London and subsequently loaned to KLM.

As of September 15, 1945, therefore, the KNILM was relieved of the management of KLM, but because of the fact that the KNILM staff for the time being was going to stay in New York, they were charged with the representation of KLM in the United States.

The divorce of KLM and KNILM which ended this three year old marriage of convenience, did not mean that the New York office dissolved its relations with the West Indies section. On the contrary, since the opening of the Miami



service much more work of the most diversified kinds has had to be done in the U. S. on behalf of the West Indies operations.

### Princess Juliana travels by KLM

We wish to complete the story of 1945 by putting on record the most honorable task consigned to KLM in that year.

In November 1945 Her Royal Highness, Princess Juliana of the Netherlands, who since 1940 had made Her residence near Ottawa, Canada, decided to pay a visit to Surinam, and it was arranged that She should travel by KLM.

The cabin of the Lockheed MEEUW was specially fitted to carry the Princess and Her Suite as comfortably as possible on this long trip. The Royal party left Miami on November 1st, escorted by two military bombers, one of the U. S. Army Air Force and the other of the Netherlands Indies Army Air Force. A stop was made at Port au Prince, Haiti, where the Princess was welcomed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Gerard Lescot and Mme. Lescot, whose home She visited briefly before making a short automobile trip around the Haitian

*The MEEUW escorted by a U.S.A.A.F. and a Netherlands Indies Army bomber*



*Upon arrival at Port au Prince, H.R.H. is welcomed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Gerard Lescot and Mme. Lescot*

capital. The next landing was made in San Juan, Puerto Rico, where Her Royal Highness was received by several of the high ranking United States military authorities, after which the Princess proceeded to the home of Governor Rexford G. Tugwell, where She had dinner and spent the night.

After the departure from Puerto Rico the course was set in such a way that the MEEUW passed over the little Netherlands islands in the northeast corner of the Caribbean. The airfield on St. Maarten was not completed at that time, so that no intermediate landing could be made, but this was partly compensated for by the MEEUW flying low and circling over the islands. Work had stopped, schools were closed and everywhere flags were waving gaily in the strong breeze of the northeast trade wind. On a large field the school children were standing at attention, forming the letters "O" for the House of Orange, and "V" for victory, while Princess Juliana's greeting cards were dropped from the plane. A few minutes later the course to St. John, Antigua, had to be resumed; the MEEUW was refueled and from there on the flight proceeded straight to Port of Spain, Trinidad, where, after the landing, an honor guard of British Marines greeted the Princess' plane by playing HET WILHELMUS. The Princess was wel-

comed by the Governor, other British officials and U. S. Admiral A. G. Robinson, who formerly was stationed in Curacao. After a short rest the party proceeded on the last lap of the journey to Surinam.

The MEEUW arrived at Zandery airport late in the afternoon of November 2nd. Units of both the Netherlands and United States forces in Surinam participated in the warm welcome for Her Royal Highness and, as She stepped from the plane a band played the Netherlands national anthem. The Princess was received by Governor J. C. Kielstra and many high ranking American and Surinam officials.

After inspecting the Guards of Honor the Princess continued to Paramaribo and during the two-hour procession She won the hearts of Surinam's polyglot population. As the car passed through the various settlements, the natives waved, cheered and threw flowers in the path of the Princess, the Carib women in gold-banded festal garb, Creole women in their voluminous "Kotta Missie" dresses, and the Hindus and Chinese in their traditional costumes, each in their own way extending greetings.

It goes beyond the scope of our story to fully relate the visit of Her Royal Highness to Surinam—the first time that Princess Juliana had visited one of the Netherlands overseas territories and the first time She had set foot on free Netherlands soil since May 1940. These were days of unlimited enthusiasm, of demonstrations of genuine patriotism and pledges of unbreakable ties of the House of Orange with the people of Surinam, of all color, race and creed.

Completing Her week's visit the Princess left Surinam on November 9th for Her return flight to the United States. That trip was also made in the MEEUW and accompanied by the same military escort. The crew members who had the honor of flying the Princess on this memorable occasion were Captain Bos, co-pilot Rouffaer, flight engineer Van der Ham and radio officer Spanjaard. Throughout the entire trip the West Indies Manager accompanied Her Royal Highness.

Before the end of the year KLM was able to link Curacao's little part in the northwest corner of the Caribbean with the main island.

At the end of November the field on St. Maarten was ready; on December 3rd the first plane landed on the island amid intense curiosity and tremendous enthusiasm. It was not the intention to start with a regular schedule at once, but rather to carry out charter flights as circumstances might demand.



# 1944

The total traffic on the West Indies lines during the first six months of 1944 again was higher than during the corresponding period of the previous year; it remained at a fairly steady level and averaged monthly 2700 passengers, 880,000 passenger miles sold, 27 tons of freight and extra baggage. KLM's Lockheeds and Fokkers combined flew an average of 650 hours, covering almost 100,000 miles per month. Only the amount of airmail, mostly due to the inauguration of the PAA service from Miami to Curacao, but also as a result of the withdrawal of part of the U. S. forces from the Dutch islands, decreased to barely half that carried in 1943.

As in the beginning of KLM's business in the Caribbean, the Curacao-Aruba line still ranked first in the number of passengers carried, with an average of 1500 each month. Curacao-La Guaira had shifted to second place with about 560; unpretentious Bonaire came third with over 500 passengers arriving and departing. Fourth was Maracaibo with 250 which, a few years before, occupied a strong position as second. Trinidad averaged the same figure as Barranquilla with about 180, followed closely by Miami and Paramaribo. The other destinations attracted less than one hundred passengers per month each.

## 1944 Schedules

During the greater part of 1944 the schedules showed the following services:

Curacao—Aruba (local) .....	8 times weekly
“ —La Guaira .....	5 “ “
“ —Aruba-Maracaibo .....	5 “ “
“ —Bonaire .....	5 “ “
“ —Miami .....	2 “ “
(once via Port au Prince and once via Kingston)	
“ —Barranquilla .....	once “
“ —Kingston .....	“ “
“ —Trinidad .....	“ “
“ —Trinidad-Paramaribo .....	“ “

In addition the schedule included the following trips: a so-called regular extra once a week to Barranquilla, and once every two weeks a flight Curacao-Trinidad, one Curacao-Trinidad-Paramaribo, and one Curacao-Cuidad Trujillo. The mileage of all the routes combined was 4,540 and about 20,000 miles were flown each week on the scheduled services, not including the charter flights and extra trips.

After the completion of the airfield near Philipsburg, KLM soon started to carry out charter flights to the Island of St. Maarten; the interest in this service grew to such an extent that for the coming months an average of two trips each month was fully justified.

## Princess Juliana makes a second trip with KLM

In February of this year for the second time KLM was honored by providing transportation for Her Royal Highness, Princess Juliana, this time for a visit to Curacao and Aruba. On February 24th the MEEUW, manned by Captain Hakkenberg, co-pilot Versteegh, Jr., flight engineer Van der Ham and radio officer Van Haaren, left Curacao for Miami, via Kingston. On the 26th they returned over the same route with the Princess and Her Suite, again accompanied by the General Manager Dr. Ysselstyn. In Kingston, where the little station building had been decorated in bright colors, the Governor of Jamaica and Lady Huggins, the Netherlands Consul Sir Alfred D'Costa and several military and civil authorities were present to greet Her Royal Highness.

At 5:50 P.M. the MEEUW landed on Hato airfield. For this occasion the passenger department had been temporarily shifted to one of the hangars, so that the station was entirely available for the reception of the Princess. His Excellency the Governor and many military and civil officials, as well as representatives of various foreign countries, were there to welcome the Princess; as the plane rolled to a stop a band struck up the Netherlands anthem and a military guard of honor presented arms.

On February 29th a special flight was made to Aruba and back, which enabled Princess Juliana to pay a visit of eight hours to that island.

On March 2nd Her Royal Highness visited the Island of Bonaire, where a colorful group awaited her in gaily decorated carts and trucks. This flight was made in the ORIOL. The next day the MEEUW carried the Royal party to La Guaira for an official visit to Venezuela. One of the Lodestars was used by the authorities accompanying the Princess on this trip. On Her arrival the Princess was hailed by the people of Venezuela as "the worthy representative of a heroic people" and was given a thunderous ovation on this, Her first visit to this South American Republic. Her Highness and Her Suite stayed for several hours in Caracas, where a brilliant reception was given by General Isaias Medina, President of the Republic. The climax of Her visit was the ceremony by which President Medina invested Princess Juliana with the highest Venezuelan honor, the Collier of the Order of the Liberator, America's oldest decoration, created in Peru in 1825, and which is given only to chiefs of state or heirs apparent. At present it is held by only six persons.



*Princess Juliana in the MEEUW. With Her are Jhr. van Tets, Her sec'y, and Dr. Ysselstyn*

This visit of Her Royal Highness to Venezuela without any doubt strengthened the already close ties between that country and the Netherlands. On March 4th the return trip toward Miami was undertaken, the crew this time consisting of Captain Groeneveld, co-pilot Van der Kolk, flight engineer Van der Ham and radio officer Broekhuysen. In the meantime the airfield on St. Maarten had been completed, so that a landing on that island was included. The entire population of St. Maarten and many inhabitants of the two neighboring islands were present to greet the Princess. Her Royal Highness spent the night on the island and the following morning the trip was continued, via Ciudad Trujillo and Camaguey. In Ciudad Trujillo the Princess paid a visit to the President of the Dominican Republic.

On the entire trip the MEEUW was escorted by two bombers of the U. S. Army Air Force. During the journey, which had done so much for the strengthening of the relationship of the House of Orange with the Netherlands territories in the Caribbean and several of the surrounding Republics, the Princess traveled over 4,000 miles by KLM.



*H. Nieuwenhuis, Managing Director KLM since September, 1943*



*Major P. J. C. Vos, Managing Director of KLM since September, 1943*

## PAA includes Curacao in its schedules

An important event for Curacao in the development of commercial aviation was the opening of the regular service by the Pan American Airways from Miami via Port au Prince, Ciudad Trujillo and Curacao to La Guaira in February 1944. They started to fly three times weekly, but soon thereafter the service became a daily one. As expected this new connection caused some reduction in KLM's traffic, but fortunately the demand for seats was still so great that the average number of passengers in the KLM planes between Curacao and Miami remained on a high level. The only marked decrease was in the transportation of airmail, because of the fact that the only sound principle, that the mail should be forwarded to its destination at the first available opportunity, was carefully maintained. Temporarily, during the summer, there was some reduction in the traffic figures on a few of the routes. Several defense projects in the Caribbean were nearing completion and the constant flow in both directions of personnel, employed with these works, started to decrease gradually.

## Miami traffic jumps ahead

But in the fall there was an unprecedented demand for seats. In the beginning of October '44 most Miami-Curacao trips for January 1945 were already booked to capacity.

To the extent permitted by the equipment and personnel available, extra flights were added to the regular schedule. In the second half of the year the number of passengers on the Miami line increased to a monthly average of 260, and still the waiting lists grew longer and longer. From seventh place in number of passengers, this vital service jumped ahead to fourth place, leaving behind Maracaibo, Trinidad and Barranquilla. As to passenger mileage the Miami line beat all others by a wide margin.

In March two veteran employees of KLM were assigned for duties in Curacao. They were Mr. J. J. Peters, formerly an inspector on KLM's Amsterdam-Batavia line and later an officer in the Netherlands Military Flying Service, and Captain Van Balkom, who finally came back to Curacao after a diversified career. We mentioned before that he left Curacao in 1935; after that he had flown over all Europe and between Amsterdam and Batavia, and he assisted with the evacuation of Java in those fateful days of February 1942. In Australia he served with the Netherlands Indies Army Transport Command and finally the Management got him released for duties in Curacao.

In the past the position of operations manager in Curacao had always been fulfilled by the senior pilot, and as long as an airmet of limited size was operated and the duties of the pilots could be arranged in such a way that the senior pilot had sufficient time to manage this department, this set-up worked out satisfactorily. However, the responsible work connected with the operation of much longer lines, the addition of complicated international regulations, the sharp increase in flying hours and so forth, took practically the entire time of the senior pilot. These considerations led to a reorganization of the operations department in Curacao and the establishment of a flight control office. Captain Hakkenberg, with considerable devotion, succeeded in running the flight bureau after Ruppelin's departure, notwithstanding the lack of adequate help. But in the end a reorganization was inevitable.

As already mentioned, during 1943 De Graaf, head of KNILM's operations department, spent several months in Curacao to assist Hakkenberg in establishing this new branch. Finally, in March 1944 Captain Van Balkom arrived in Curacao and, in accordance with his seniority and also in view of his long practice with these matters, was put in charge of the operations department, to which he could devote his full time.

Mr. Peters, with his long experience with KLM, was a very welcome addition to Dr. Ysselstyn's small office staff, which for several years had worked

under a continuous strain as a result of the shortage of skilled personnel.

Three KNILM pilots who for many months had rendered valuable service to KLM during the time we were so short of pilots, returned to their own company. Captains Rouffaer and Van Rees left on April 4th for the United States, where they were assigned to special duties; Versteegh, Jr., followed a month later. The latter however returned temporarily to Curacao in August in view of a number of essential charter flights that had to be carried out during the following months.

In May two co-pilots arrived from England, Mr. W. C. van Heugten and Mr. C. van der Plas. In October these two men were elevated to the rank of first pilot. Captain Hulsebos, who arrived in October 1943, returned to the U. S. in July, where he was assigned to other duties. It was also a loss to KLM that Van Mannekus, who had been in charge of the dispatch of our planes for a long time, left Curacao in August to accept a position with the Netherlands Indies Government in Australia. In August another KLM pilot arrived from England, Mr. V. A. Mans, so that the flying staff at that time, besides the Operations Manager Captain Van Balkom, consisted of seven captains, three co-pilots, fifteen flight engineers (several of whom were assigned to ground duties by turns) and eight radio operators, the latter number including the chief of the radio maintenance department, Van Haaren.

*Lodestar PJ-AKA and Lockheed PJ-AIK at Port au Prince airport*



## Lockheed-12s are added to the KLM fleet

Some relief in the still existing shortage of equipment was obtained when the Commander in Chief of the Royal Netherlands Indies Army Air Force put at the disposal of KLM a couple of Lockheed L-12s. These small planes had been used for some time for the training of Netherlands Indies pilots in the United States on twin-engined aircraft. After the completion of the training program a few of these Lockheeds were made available for other purposes. They could carry only four or five passengers, but they were a welcome acquisition for KLM, being very useful for charter flights and also for training and refresher courses for the KLM flying personnel.

The first plane to be reconditioned for our own use bore the civil registration mark PJ-AKC; it was put into service with KLM in March 1944.

An important piece of work was finally completed in August. The second edition of the Agents Manual was distributed among KLM's offices and agents throughout the West Indies. People who have themselves never helped in the compilation of such a simple-looking book cannot possibly understand the tremendous amount of work involved in gathering and bringing up to date the vast amount of data, chapters full of instructions and directions, all of which are an indispensable guide to those who sell air transportation. The first edition,

*The KOLIBRIE in front of the temporary station building on Palisadoes airport, Kingston, Jamaica*



which was compiled in 1935 by Bouman and Koot, had gradually become obsolete. There were so many corrections and additions that little was left of the original text. Besides the personnel of the head office in Curacao, Mr. de Jong, Traffic Manager of KNILM in New York, had a large share in compiling this work.

In the same month a new and colorful route map, showing the West Indies lines, was published.

A sad event occurred in May. One of KLM's most honored collaborators, John G. Eman, head of the Eman Trading Company in Aruba, who from the first days of operations in the West Indies had been one of the strongest advocates of air-travel and throughout the years a close friend of KLM in the most all-embracing sense of the word, died after a very short illness. His passing away means an irreplaceable loss not only to his relatives, his friends and his firm, but for KLM as well.

On July 3rd the President of the Republic of Haiti, Dr. Elie Lescot and his suite, traveled in a special KLM plane from Port au Prince to La Guaira. On his way back to Port au Prince the President stayed two days in Curacao as a guest of the Governor, His Excellency P. Kasteel. On July 10th this honored visitor returned to Haiti.

### Regular service opened to St. Maarten

As of July 27th the regular service from Curacao to Philipsburg on St. Maarten was inaugurated. In accordance with the demands KLM started oper-

ating it once every two weeks. The flying time between Curacao and St. Maarten is three hours and forty-five minutes. With this newest addition Curacao had become the hub of a vast spider web of airlines all over the Caribbean. The establishment of the airline to St. Maarten was made financially possible because the Government of Curacao guaranteed a minimum revenue on these trips. This extension brought KLM's route mileage up to 5,180.

A couple of important charter flights between Paramaribo and Miami were carried out in June, July and August on behalf of the Netherlands Government. On one of these trips, under command of Captain Te Roller, only one intermediate landing was made and the whole 2,410 mile flight was completed in one day, the actual flying time being 14 hours.

Another notable flight was made by Captain Hakkenberg, when the Lockheed-12, PJ-AKC, flew from Curacao to Nassau in the Bahama Islands; this was the first time that one of KLM's planes landed in that territory.

Remarkable in this period was the great demand for seats on the Barranquilla service as a result of the increasing interest of Curacao people for Colombia as a vacation resort.

The high traffic figures scored in August 1943 were surpassed again in August 1944. The number of passengers, 3,451, was the highest in the history of KLM in the West Indies; the number of passenger miles sold was almost 1,000,000; the freight and excess baggage carried amounted to more than 64,000 pounds. It is worth mentioning here that during that same month KLM started to carry fresh vegetables, fruit and milk from Miami to Curacao, whereas during

*On Soledad Airport, Barranquilla*



*President Lescot thanks the KLM crew of PJ-AKB for his trip on completion of his visit to Curacao. L. to r.: Capt. Van der Kolk, the President, radio-op. Buitendyk, flight-engr. Van Onselen*



*June 11, 1944. Miss Lee Yu Ching, famous Chinese aviatrix, arrives in Curacao, on good-will flight through Caribbean. L. to r.: the Secretary of Chinese Consulate; Capt. Hakkenberg, Miss Lee Yu Ching, Mr. Peters of KLM; Chinese Consul; Mr. Chong, well-known Chinese business-man, and radio-op. Van Haaren*





# K·L·M WEST INDIES SYSTEM



- PRESENT K·L·M LINES
- REROUTED OR SUSPENDED LINES
- OTHER AIRLINES

FIGURES IN CIRCLES INDICATE YEAR OF ROUTE INAUGURATION

- |        |        |
|--------|--------|
| ① 1935 | ⑥ 1940 |
| ② 1936 | ⑦ 1941 |
| ③ 1937 | ⑧ 1942 |
| ④ 1938 | ⑨ 1943 |
| ⑤ 1939 | ⑩ 1944 |



ATLANTIC OCEAN

CARIBBEAN SEA

MIAMI

HAVANA

CAMAGUEY

JAMAICA

KINGSTON

PORT AU PRINCE

HAITI

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

CIUDAD TRUJILLO

SAN JUAN

PUERTO RICO

ST. THOMAS

ST. MARTIN

ANTIGUA

ST. LUCIA

BARBADOS

PORT OF SPAIN

TRINIDAD

ARUBA

CURIAÇAO

BOINAIRE

BARRANQUILLA

MANACAIBO

CORO

LA GUAIRA

BARCELONA

CIUDAD BOLIVAR

COLOMBIA

BOGOTA

BRITISH GUIANA

PARAMARIBO

GUAYANAS

PARAGUAY

STARRIGA

PANAMA

BALBOA

VENEZUELA

## KLM AIRLINE ROUTE MILES

### 1944 Schedules

Curacao-Aruba .....	73 miles	Curacao-Aruba-Port au Prince-
Curacao-Aruba-Maracaibo .....	241 "	Camaguey-Miami .....
Curacao-Aruba-Barranquilla .....	412 "	Curacao-Aruba-Ciudad Trujillo ...
Curacao-Aruba-Kingston .....	660 "	Curacao-St. Maarten.....
Curacao-Aruba-Kingston-Camaguey-		Curacao-Bonaire .....
Miami .....	1258 "	Curacao-Trinidad .....
Curacao-Aruba-Port au Prince.....	544 "	Curacao-Trinidad-Paramaribo ....
Curacao-La Guaira .....	173 miles	

## POST-WAR PLANS

At the International Aviation Conference held in Chicago in November, 1944, upon the instigation of the U. S. Government, the Netherlands Government delegation submitted the following international air routes, sought for the Netherlands after the war, in, or in connection with KLM's operations in the West Indies:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>*1. Netherlands West Indies—Venezuela (La Guaira, Coro, Maracaibo);</p> <p>*2. Netherlands West Indies—Colombia (Barranquilla);</p> <p>*3. Netherlands West Indies—Havana (Cuba);</p> <p>*4. Netherlands West Indies—Trinidad (B.W.I.);</p> <p>*5. Netherlands West Indies—Dominican Republic;</p> <p>*6. Netherlands West Indies—Jamaica (B.W.I.);</p> <p>*7. Netherlands West Indies—Miami (via Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba);</p> | <p>8. Netherlands West Indies—Europe:<br/>           (a) Curacao-Paramaribo-Natal-Sal-Lisbon-Amsterdam;<br/>           (b) Curacao-Bermuda-Azores-Amsterdam;</p> <p>9. Surinam—Buenos Aires (via Paramaribo-St. Luiz-Pernambuco-San Salvador-Rio de Janeiro-Montevideo);</p> <p>10. Surinam—Africa—Netherlands Indies (via Paramaribo-Natal-Freetown-Lagos-Lake Chad or Kana El Fasher-Khartoum-Sharjah-Karachi;<br/>           (a) Karachi-Delhi-Calcutta-Rangoon-Bangkok-Penang-Medan;<br/>           (b) Karachi-Madras-Colombo-Medan).</p> |
|---|--|

\*These routes have previously been in operation.



several months substantial quantities of meat were sent by plane from Curacao to Bonaire.

Due to the increased possibilities for the use of the Lodestars the technical department had the opportunity to give the TROEPIAAL, after its return from Jamaica, a complete and thorough overhaul; this work had to be extended over several months. After the PJ-AKB had undergone a similar conversion previously, in August the cabin of the Lodestar PJ-AKA was completely fitted for commercial use.

With the increasing traffic and addition of new lines the rolling stock was gradually enlarged. The road between Paramaribo and the Zandery field being completed, we first ran a large bus between those two points, but the unsatisfactory condition of the road compelled us to resort to smaller vehicles. For the connection over the road between Hato and the city one large and two small buses were added to Curacao's automobile fleet. By August it had increased to twelve units, including six station-wagons and three buses, and orders were being placed for more.

### KLM's representation in the U.S.A.

It might be mentioned here that, as of September 1st, 1944, Mr. Bouman, the former Manager of the West Indies section, was appointed by the Board of Directors as General Representative for KLM in the United States, succeeding Major Versteegh, who, because of developments in the Pacific, is expected to leave New York with the KNILM staff in the near future.

The extension for five years of the contract with Venezuela, which became effective in October 1944, was a great satisfaction. Recalling the long period during 1936 when KLM was anxiously awaiting the signing of the first contract with that country, it brought a feeling of gratification; apparently the Venezuelan Government appreciated the reliability of the fast air connections with which KLM always endeavored to serve the interests of that progressive republic.

### The conclusion of our story

It was the intention that this book be in the hands of our friends ten years after the date the SNIP landed on Hato. Consequently, the story of KLM's operations in the Caribbean must be concluded a couple of months too early. During November and December of this year many notable things may happen in the West Indies, important decisions may be taken; the end of the war in Europe, for which we pray so fervently, will undoubtedly have its consequences. However, the printer is waiting.

If traffic in the West Indies continues as it is now, figures for the year 1944, notwithstanding the arrival of a strong competitor on one of the most important

lines, will again be very satisfactory. KLM will have carried about 35,000 passengers, who will have traveled 11,500,000 miles in its planes. Those planes together will have flown 1,250,000 miles in some 8,000 hours. Cargo and excess baggage will amount to approximately 740,000 pounds, and the airmail to 75,000 pounds.

That is 15 times the number of passengers carried in 1935, 50 times the number of passenger miles, 40 times the goods, and almost 120 times the airmail in that same first year of our operations. The decrease in the amount of airmail, as explained before, mainly due to the fact that all southbound mail from Miami is being shipped by PAA, will undoubtedly cause a substantial cut in the net revenue over this year. Nevertheless we are confident that the operations over 1944 will yield a pleasant, be it moderate profit.

Though the average seating capacity of the planes was increased due to the addition of the Lodestars, the load factor over 1944 reached the high level of 84%, only 2% lower than in 1945.

Thus approaches the end of the ten year period, in which KLM flew 37,148

*H.E. Elie Lescot, President of Republic of Haiti, is welcomed by Governor P. Kasteel upon his arrival at Hato airport, July 8, 1944*



hours, carried almost 170,000 passengers, and sold over forty million passenger revenue miles. Skill and devotion of our men, and reliable, be it small, equipment, are the main factors which enable us to proudly state that in all those ten years we had to report only one fatal accident.

December 22, 1944 will mark the end of the decade in which KLM started to build its Western bridgehead for the Atlantic airway from Holland to Curacao. Four years have elapsed since the time we could say we were ready to welcome the planes that would leave Amsterdam and, after flying over 6,000 miles, would land at Hato airport, KLM's Caribbean spider web providing fast through connections to important traffic centers in that region. After May 1940 little of KLM was left on the European continent. For four long years the Netherlands people had to endure a most appalling slavery. But at the moment these last lines are written the Allied Armies are invading Germany and have crossed the southern border of Holland. On September 14th more than a thousand army transports dropped paratroopers and tons and tons of supplies on strategic points in Holland. Against desperate fighting of fanatical Nazis the allied soldiers, guided by Dutch commandos and underground forces, are pushing ahead. But over the difficult terrain progress is slow and made only at high cost of lives and property.

On October 7th it was 25 years since KLM was founded in The Hague, starting its quarter of a century of uninterrupted operation of international airlines. By that date only a small part of the Netherlands had been liberated, but there is still hope that on the day that marks the tenth anniversary of the landing of the SNIP at Hato, the bestial suppressors will have been chased from

most of the country and that a free Dutch Government, under the beloved House of Orange, will have been reinstated.

A great and difficult task lies ahead. However, what was done in 1919, can be done again. KLM over there will rise once more; it will be rebuilt on its shattered foundations; a new European bridgehead will be erected. Many things will be different from 25 years ago. The main concern will not be just a few hops of a couple of hundred miles with the tiny single engined crates we called aeroplanes in 1920. Commercial aviation is already circling the globe. It has grown into a major means of transportation, in which every country that endeavors to play a role in world trade, and which has adequate technical ability, will justly desire its share. It would be squarely against the principles the United Nations are fighting for if the means necessary for a healthy economical development would be denied to any of the countries who, by sacrificing blood and property, have proven that they honestly desire the realization of the "Four Freedoms" for all human beings.

A lot has been said about a fifth freedom—the freedom of the air. At present its complete fulfillment seems rather far off; it is an immensely complicated problem which cannot be solved on V-day. There will be quite a number of international conferences and diplomatic negotiations, which will probably result in most people obtaining a little less than they think they are entitled to. The best we can hope for now is that every nation who deserves it gets a fair chance; then world's commercial aviation, stimulated by a healthy competition and fostered by loyal cooperation, may become one of the most effective contributions to man's living in peace, health and prosperity.

*Modern architecture. Station building in Aruba. Designed and built by the Curacao Public Works Dep't*



*Rear view*



*Front view*

Perhaps soon KLM will be able to place the arch of its Atlantic bridge on the two bridgeheads and establish the link between the Netherlands in Europe and in America. And then we can gratefully look back to the decade during which we were able to keep the KLM flag flying on free Netherlands territory.

Without customers you can't do business, and therefore, before closing, a word of sincere appreciation is certainly due to the many thousands of people from all parts of the world who, either by just hopping over to Aruba in half an hour or by traveling thousands of miles in KLM's planes, have shown confidence in the organization, the men and the equipment of the West Indies Section of the Royal Dutch Airlines.



This story is written by L. F. Bouman, the maps and the artwork are done by Ralph Warren, and it is printed by Rogers-Kellogg-Stillson, Inc., New York.

The photographs mostly originate from the writer's private collection; in addition several were supplied by KLM, Curacao, and the Netherlands Information Bureau, New York. We regret that many interesting pictures, especially those relating to the history of the operations in the last four years, had to be omitted due to wartime restrictions.

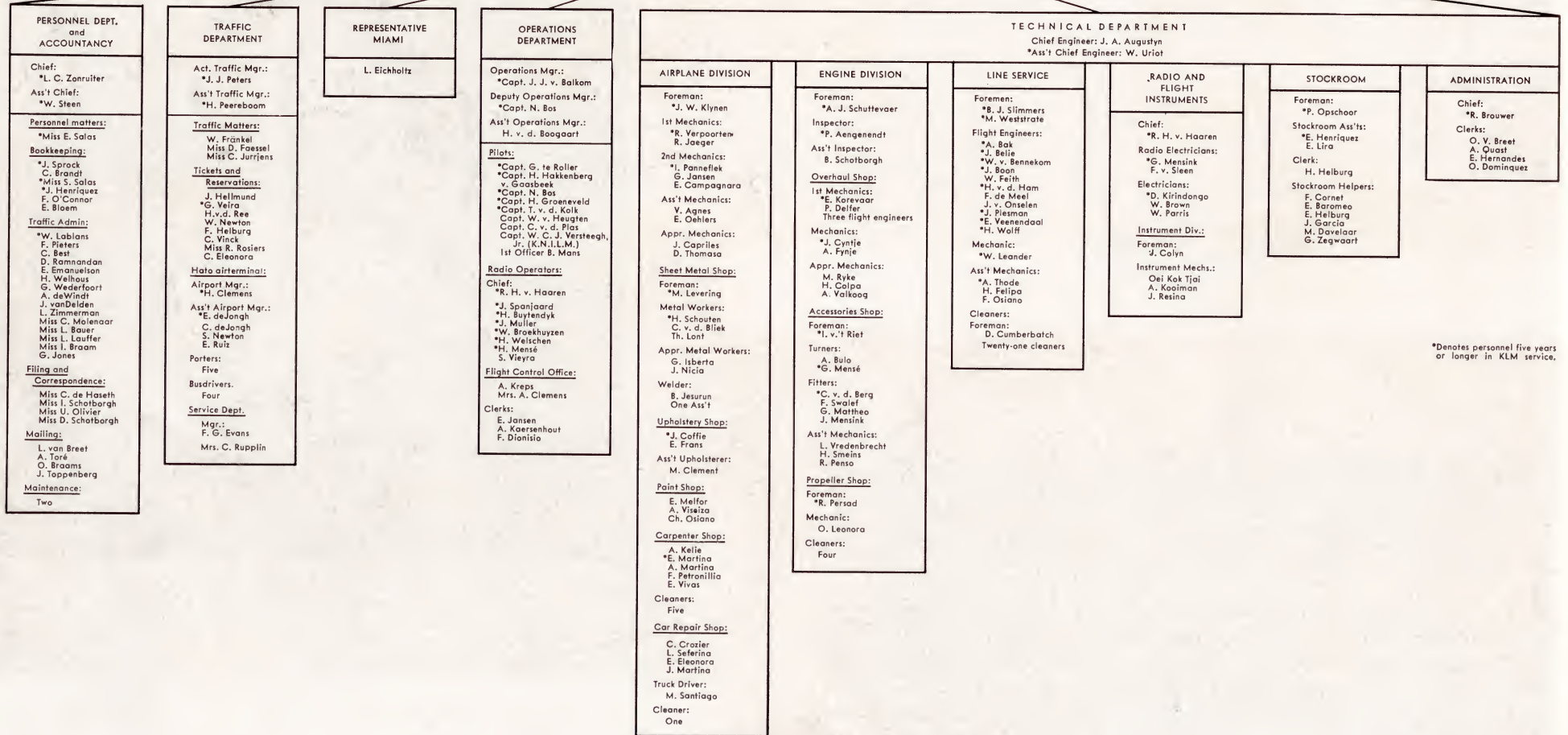
New York, November 1, 1944.



*Lodestar over Caribbean*

**PERSONNEL CHART**  
**K.L.M. ROYAL DUTCH AIRLINES**  
**West Indies Section**  
**October 1, 1944**

General Manager — Dr. D. A. Ysselstyn



\*Denotes personnel five years or longer in KLM service.



*Model for new Hato station building, designed by Public Works Dep't of Curacao;  
construction to be started in near future*



*Miami, Florida (permission of Publicity Dep't, City of Miami)*



## AGENCIES OF KLM ROYAL DUTCH AIRLINES IN THE WEST INDIES AND SOUTH AMERICA

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KLM wishes to pay its sincerest compliments to its agencies throughout the West Indies who, by their faithful cooperation and consistent interest in the fostering of commercial air travel, have contributed materially to the steady development of the West Indies section:

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Barcelona, Venezuela  
MANUAL CHAFARDET

Barranquilla, Colombia  
AVIANCA  
CURACAO TRADING Co.

Basseterre, St. Kitts  
RYAN & UDDENBERG

Bogota, Colombia  
CURACAO TRADING Co.

Bridgetown, Barbados  
S. P. MUSSON SON & Co., LTD.

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NUEVITAS TRADING Co.

Caracas, Venezuela  
ROYAL NETHERLANDS S. S. Co.  
CLUB DE TURISMO

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PETER & Co.

Ciudad Bolivar, Venezuela  
CASALTA & BATTISTINI

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CURACAO TRADING Co.

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San Fernando, Trinidad  
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St. Maarten, N. W. I.  
CYRUS W. WATHEY

Willemstad, Curacao  
S. E. L. MADURO & SONS, INC.

KLM is also most appreciative to Holland American Line, its General Passenger Agents for the United States, Montreal and Mexico City, the offices of Royal Netherlands Steamship Company throughout the West Indies, to Pan American Airways and to Eastern Airlines, for the loyal manner in which they handled KLM's business in connection with the Caribbean Operations.



# TRAFFIC STATISTICS OF K.L.M. ROYAL DUTCH AIRLINES WEST INDIES SECTION

